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Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), prepared pursuant to Council resolution 1999/36.

* E/2001/100.

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Report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Council resolution 1999/36 in which the Secretary-General was requested "to transmit to the Council at its substantive session of 2001 a comprehensive report prepared by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, in collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, on the progress made in the response to the epidemic and its impact on reducing the transmission of HIV and increasing the quality and accessibility of care, treatment and support for people living with HIV or AIDS". During its meeting of 29 June 1999, the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) of UNAIDS, in its decisions and conclusions, noted that, in 2001, a single document should be prepared to meet reporting requirements previously covered by the biennial progress report to PCB and the biennial report to the Council on HIV/AIDS. In order to meet the requirements of those requests, the report submitted by the Executive Director of UNAIDS to PCB is also being submitted to the Council as a conference room paper (E/2001/CRP.2).

The present report describes the status of the epidemic, the United Nations system support to an expanded response, the country-level response, and the efforts of the UNAIDS secretariat, the co-sponsors and other partners towards more effective and coordinated action.

Together with Governments, the UNAIDS secretariat, the seven co-sponsors and other United Nations system organizations, the corporate sector and non-governmental organizations are working at various levels to fight the epidemic. The role of the UNAIDS secretariat has been to lead, strengthen and support an expanded response. This has been done mainly through facilitation and coordination, best practice development and advocacy. Experiences in co-sponsorship show positive results at the country, regional and global levels. However, challenges remain, including scaling up effective interventions through comprehensive programmes so that they benefit much larger populations; further improvements in planning efforts required for a strengthened United Nations system response; and increased resource mobilization commensurate with the needs of the epidemic.

The report concludes with a list of recommendations for action. The Economic and Social Council is invited to review this report for possible endorsement of its recommendations.

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The list of abbreviations used can be found in the conference room paper containing the report of the Executive Director to the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS (E/2001/CRP.2).

I. Introduction

1. This report covers major developments concerning the HIV/AIDS epidemic and key aspects of the United Nations system response since the last substantive discussion on HIV/AIDS issues in the Economic and Social Council. During the period in question — from July 1999 to May 2001 — the AIDS epidemic has been recognized as a genuine emergency threatening human welfare and prosperity in large parts of the developing world. There has been a quantum leap in the scope and scale of national and international responses to HIV/AIDS. The activity of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)[1] and key partners reflects the new environment. The actions and developments documented in the present report are not an exhaustive listing of all the HIV/AIDS-related work of the United Nations system but, rather, highlight crucial actions essential for the effective coordination of the response to the epidemic.

2. The period under review has seen the start of a process of "doing business differently". It has laid the groundwork for a more mature, focused, and coordinated response to the epidemic from United Nations system organizations as well as from a much wider set of national and international partners. The Economic and Social Council is requested to provide guidance on the challenges identified in the report.

II. Status of the epidemic

3. The most recent estimates underscore the continuing concentration of the epidemic in developing countries: of the more than 36 million people living with HIV at the end of 2000, some 95 per cent were in the developing world. Sub-Saharan Africa is the worst hit region. Even though the number of new infections in some countries is stabilizing, in the eight African countries with HIV prevalence of at least 15 per cent, approximately one third of today's population of 15-year-olds can expect to die from AIDS. In the Caribbean region, AIDS is already the primary cause of death among young men and women. There are steep rises of new infections in Eastern Europe and Latin America. In Asia, some 7 million people are living with HIV. In industrialized countries, the disproportionate impact of HIV in minority communities and the risk of complacency are also of growing concern. The epidemic is having a severe impact in hard-hit regions, reversing hard-won development gains in life expectancy and health as well as economic and social development.

4. Children and young people are among the most affected by HIV/AIDS. Millions of children have been orphaned by AIDS, and tens of millions more will lose one or both parents to the pandemic over the next 10 years. Increasing numbers of children are living in households with an HIV-infected member, and children are taking on the responsibilities of caring for sick parents, generating income and producing food. Women are more vulnerable to infection than men owing to a mix of biological and cultural factors. This is especially true for young girls. Studies among various African populations indicate that rates of HIV infection in young women aged between 15 and 19 may be up to six times higher than rates among young men.

III. United Nations system support to an expanded response

5. Over the past two years, UNAIDS has effectively promoted HIV/AIDS as a priority on international agendas and has emphasized the importance of leadership in all sectors (national and community governments, civil society, international community, donors and private sector). During the period under review, HIV/AIDS has assumed an increasingly prominent place on the global, national and community political agenda.

6. Within the United Nations itself during the past two years, HIV/AIDS has received one of the highest priorities, with outstanding commitment from the Secretary-General and increasing commitment from co-sponsors and other United Nations partners. The leadership role of the United Nations is typified by the deliberations of the Security Council, which addressed HIV/AIDS on three occasions during the reporting period, and by the Secretary-General's personal leadership and call to action in April 2001 around five priority areas. This kind of leadership is needed to drive forward the efforts of all levels of society against the epidemic.

7. The General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS (June 2001) will be a high-water mark in the political response to HIV/AIDS. It is a unique opportunity to secure global commitment to enhanced

coordination of national, regional and international efforts against the epidemic. Governments are expected to commit themselves to a political declaration to fight against HIV/AIDS. It will be the critical opportunity to put HIV at the top of the global political agenda and to mobilize greatly increased resources. The UNAIDS secretariat has been designated the substantive secretariat of the special session, and the co-sponsors are heavily engaged in all aspects of preparation.

8. The UNAIDS approach to the epidemic over the biennium has been multifaceted. Progress has been achieved in advancing both the prevention and the care agendas. Although continuing innovation in the means of prevention is required, much of the challenge ahead lies in expanding access to key commodities and scaling up interventions known to be effective. The United Nations system has made significant progress in promoting best practice and sound policy and providing technical support and networks, capacity-building and advocacy. UNAIDS has disseminated information to enhance the understanding of effective prevention information. Raising awareness about the risks of HIV infection and promoting behaviour change to prevent infection have been shown to be effective. Special emphasis was placed during the biennium on prevention programming in the education sector, an area in which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are providing leadership, as well as on prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child and on promotion of the female condom. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is focusing its activities on implementing effective drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention activities.

9. During the past two years, the agenda for increasing access to care and support has been dramatically transformed. At the beginning of the reporting period, doubts remained about whether antiretroviral therapy could be safely prescribed in resource-poor settings, and drug prices remained exorbitantly high. Now, while enormous challenges lie ahead in strengthening health infrastructure and generating sustainable national and international sources of financing for drug procurement, the issue of access to HIV-related medicines has a high political profile nationally and internationally, including within the United Nations human rights system. At its fifty-seventh session, in April 2001, the Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution on access to medication in the context of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS. With the United Nations as facilitator and partner, the advocacy of civil society, the initiatives of a number of major research and development pharmaceutical companies, and generic competition have combined to reduce significantly the prices of HIV drugs, beginning to bring them within reach of a greater number of people living with HIV in developing countries. One unintended consequence of the focus on antiretrovirals has been the way in which it has overshadowed care intervention. UNAIDS is committed to redoubling its assistance to Governments and civil society in developing comprehensive care plans, featuring voluntary counselling and testing, psychosocial support, prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections, and palliative care, and in increasing their capacities to provide antiretroviral drugs consistent with their national care plans.

10. Some progress in the cross-cutting areas of human rights and gender and in achieving greater involvement of people living with HIV and of vulnerable populations, including young people, has been achieved over the biennium. The United Nations target of a 25 per cent reduction in HIV infections in people aged 15-24 has helped to focus on the needs of those people.

IV. UNAIDS and the country-level response

11. At the end of 2000, 64 countries had completed national strategic plans on HIV/AIDS, and 28 others were developing them. UNAIDS has supported decentralized planning efforts at the district and community levels and has promoted synergy with other multilateral and bilateral partners within the framework of national strategies. One of the gaps in its work — a lack of adequate attention to care and treatment — is in part owing to the limited capacity of UNAIDS to keep up with governmental demands for support in preparing plans to expand access to care. Nonetheless, UNAIDS supported the development of 16 care plans during the past year and greatly increased its consultant base for technical resources in early 2001 in order to intensify support in this area. UNAIDS has also consistently stressed the need for planning and

implementation to focus on catalysing local and community responses to the epidemic.

12. The extensive review of the mechanisms for United Nations coordination and engagement at the country level and within the different regions reveals considerable progress over the biennium, particularly in the operation of United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS, the development of national strategic plans for HIV/AIDS, mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into a broader development framework, and intraregional collaboration. The extent of this progress, however, varies among countries.

13. During the reporting period, many United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS have demonstrated increasing effectiveness in supporting national coordination mechanisms. Several United Nations resident coordinator reports for 2000 singled out the theme groups on HIV/AIDS as the most active and successful of all such system theme groups. Many groups have broadened the scope of their efforts, to include advocacy, resource mobilization, support for national programme development, and facilitating exchanges of experiences within regions. Theme groups now increasingly focus on integrating HIV/AIDS into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and other development frameworks, such as the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) process and the common country assessments (CCA). The much wider distribution among the various co-sponsors of responsibility for chairing theme groups indicates greater engagement among more co-sponsors. Continuing constraints include the lack of sufficient incentives to encourage maximum participation by members, the reluctance of co-sponsors to programme substantial resources through theme group mechanisms, and the absence of a systematic mechanism to ensure early warning and prompt intervention in the case of theme groups experiencing problems.

14. Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into development frameworks is one of the priorities of the UNAIDS secretariat. Throughout the period, the UNAIDS secretariat, UNDCP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, the World Bank and WHO worked to mainstream AIDS, by giving it a very prominent place analytically and operationally. Global advocacy and technical work on methodologies and standard content of PRSPs and the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) were undertaken. Work was also carried out in more than a dozen African countries, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. This was achieved in part through the placement of a small, temporary technical assistance team in Africa and through the development of a tool kit for mainstreaming HIV/AIDS programmes into development agenda with the World Bank.

15. The development and implementation of United Nations integrated workplans has progressed in all regions, with some 60 per cent of the theme groups in sub-Saharan Africa now well advanced in this effort. The value of a single coherent United Nations plan, with common analysis, strategic priorities and a shared monitoring and evaluation framework, is evident. Not all unified plans, however, have evolved to the same level of comprehensiveness or strategic orientation; some remain the sum-of-the-parts of the individual United Nations programmes.

16. As countries complete their plans and move into implementation, UNAIDS has intensified its support for more precise costing of plans and for mobilizing resources. Cost projections are part of the essential toolkit for resource mobilization and now feature more prominently as a focus of UNAIDS support to Governments. Successful round tables for resource mobilization have been held in several countries, and others are planned in the near future. UNAIDS programme acceleration funds (PAF), while modest, are being used increasingly to leverage additional funds. Additional support for national resource mobilization and mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into broader development frameworks comes from the processes relating to PRSP and the HIPC initiative, as well as from important public/private partnerships on AIDS.

17. Although the resources available for the support of national responses from the UNAIDS secretariat are very modest, they represent a significant proportion of the UNAIDS core biannual budget. During the period 1998-1999, US$ 22.9 million in strategic planning development funds (SPDF) were channelled by the secretariat through the United Nations theme groups, with the dual aims of stimulating broader partnerships at the country level and consolidating a more strategic and coordinated United Nations system response. In 2000, SPDF was renamed the Programme Acceleration

Fund (PAF), which is intended to support three main areas of work. They are:

(a) Designing and developing strategic plans, United Nations integrated work plans, and grant or loan programmes addressing HIV/AIDS, including World Bank credits and debt relief programmes;

(b) Filling funding gaps in existing United Nations system integrated workplans;

(c) Initiating major new and innovative priority activities identified through the strategic planning process.

V. UNAIDS co-sponsors and secretariat

18. The individual and collective activity of co-sponsors and the secretariat over the biennium has made a significant contribution to the wider dissemination of knowledge about the epidemic and "best practices" in responding to it. Through collaboration within the United Nations system and increased activity by co-sponsors and key partners, extensive information about HIV/AIDS has been made widely available, the policy response to the epidemic has been enhanced and communication strategies, to facilitate a greater understanding of the epidemic and to promote a better environment for prevention, care and impact alleviation, have been greatly improved.

19. During past two years, the best practice collection has grown substantially, with greater sensitivity to local needs and wider dissemination to improve outreach. A continuing challenge for the next biennium is to promote wider use of the wealth of knowledge reflected in the collection, to increase its strategic orientation, and to tailor the presentation to the needs of policy makers and managers.

20. During the past two years, UNAIDS has carried out a wide range of advocacy efforts, which have led to increased coverage of HIV/AIDS-related issues by the media. The challenge for the future is to harness the power of communication networks of all kinds to ensure that HIV/AIDS-related messages are conveyed accurately and persuasively, and are appropriately targeted.

21. Regarding policy and strategy coordination, policies were harmonized in such areas as prevention of mother-to-child transmission, voluntary counselling and testing, ethics concerning vaccine development and disclosure of HIV status. With regard to strategy coordination, extensive progress was made in preparing the Global Strategy Framework on HIV/AIDS, endorsed by PCB in December 2000, and the United Nations System Strategic Plan.

22. The development of the Global Strategy Framework and the advent of a special session of the United Nations General Assembly on HIV/AIDS provided new opportunities for UNAIDS to develop a broad strategy for global action. With regard to policy coordination in specific thematic areas, co-sponsors, other United Nations system organizations and the secretariat over the biennium contributed to policy guidance in prevention of mother-to-child transmission, voluntary counselling and testing, ethics and disclosure etc.

23. The five-year evaluation of UNAIDS work and activities is now under way. The evaluation will assess the extent to which UNAIDS has met its goals and core objectives, examine the extent to which those core objectives are realistic, and review their relevance for the challenges of the next five years.

24. Other important activities related to evaluation include:

(a) Preparing detailed guidelines and indicators for monitoring and evaluating national AIDS programmes;

(b) Implementing an AIDS programme effort index in 40 countries (part of efforts to improve assessment of the national and international efforts in response to HIV/AIDS);

(c) Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa (IPAA), which includes an outline monitoring and evaluation plan and a set of indicators at country, regional, and global levels;

(d) Developing a common monitoring and evaluation framework for a subregional UNAIDS initiative, focusing on youth in the countries of the region of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Joint missions involving the World Bank and the UNAIDS secretariat have been conducted in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, and a guide, *United Nations System*

Integrated Planning in Support of the National Response to HIV/AIDS, has been prepared for the theme group. A monitoring and evaluation technical resource network in southern Africa has been established.

25. In June 1999 PCB encouraged the UNAIDS secretariat and co-sponsors to intensify their efforts towards developing a United Nations system strategic plan for HIV/AIDS, 2001-2005, in consultation with the United Nations system and other partners. Also in 1999, an Economic and Social Council resolution urged co-sponsors and other United Nations system organizations to develop and submit their proposed plans. Discussions during the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination in April 2000 further consolidated the process. The United Nations System Strategic Plan, now developed, incorporates the plans and strategies of 29 United Nations organizations working on HIV/AIDS. It identifies the strategies and partnerships necessary for the United Nations to support countries in the achievement of global goals and highlights the special contribution of the United Nations system in that respect.

26. Over the biennium, progress has been made in developing cooperation frameworks with non-co-sponsoring organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in July 1999; the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in September 1999 and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in June 2000.

27. Strengthening governance and co-sponsorship has two key dimensions: first, supporting the Programme Coordinating Board and the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations; and secondly, encouraging the United Nations system to address HIV/AIDS.

28. During the biennium PCB met three times. At its eighth meeting (28-29 June 1999), it approved the UNAIDS unified budget and workplan for 2000-2001. Other items discussed were the International Partnership against HIV/AIDS in Africa (IPAA) and the UNAIDS and United Nations response at the country level. At its ninth meeting (25-26 May 2000, Geneva), PCB endorsed a framework for action as the strategy of IPAA and the process for developing a coordinated strategy in the education sector to support and strengthen regional and national responses to HIV/AIDS. In May 2000 the Contact Group on Accelerating Access to Care and Treatment was set up, as a forum for the exchange of information, views and strategic recommendations. In December 2000 PCB endorsed the Strategic Framework for Global Leadership on HIV/AIDS, affirming that its guiding principles, expanded response approach and leadership commitments were universally applicable and should be rapidly translated into action at the country level.

29. The Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations (CCO), which guided the secretariat in the preparation of the unified budget and workplan and reviewed the Strategy Framework for Global Leadership, met twice in the past biennium. CCO gave policy advice on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and approved the criteria for co-sponsorship of UNAIDS. It also supported, through advice on UNAIDS to co-sponsor country staff, the importance of country-level action and cooperation and guidance on a multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS and on HIV/AIDS in the United Nations workplace.

VI. Conclusions

30. The key challenges confronting UNAIDS for the coming biennium include the following:

(a) Promoting a shift from pilot projects and small-scale interventions for preventing transmission of the virus to more comprehensive prevention programmes, including successful approaches for preventing transmission among young people, and taking into account the particular transmission dynamics and stage of the epidemic in different regions and countries;

(b) Promoting expanded access to existing HIV-related commodities (e.g., male and female condoms, microbicides and diagnostic equipment and materials) through increases in financing from international and national sources and promotion of the integration of public health concerns in trade policies;

(c) Further strengthening coordinated action at the country level, through support to the development and implementation of national strategic plans and national AIDS commissions, and through the development of United Nations integrated workplans;

(d) Demonstrating the links between the activities and accomplishments of UNAIDS and their actual impact on the response to the epidemic — i.e.,

through improving, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

(e) Promoting the development of comprehensive care strategies that include the full range of care interventions, including voluntary counselling and testing, psychosocial support, and access to HIV-related medicines, consistent with national plans and priorities;

(f) Enhancing UNAIDS capacity to support policy development and coordination within and between global, regional and national levels concerning prevention, care, impact alleviation and specific thematic issues;

(g) Expanding civil society in the response, through enhanced partnerships with associations of people living with HIV/AIDS, community-based organizations, religious groups, non-governmental organizations working in relevant sectors and the private sector;

(h) Mobilizing the financial resources necessary to counter the epidemic, including international assistance and national and community-level funding;

(i) Promoting the development of financial mechanisms that can deliver with greater speed and efficiency the transfer of resources to countries and communities, with clear accountability and the lowest possible transaction costs.

31. The Economic and Social Council is invited to support action to address the above-listed challenges and to follow up on the relevant recommendations adopted by the General Assembly at its special session on HIV/AIDS.

Notes

[1] UNAIDS refers to the seven co-sponsors — UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNDCP, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank — and the UNAIDS secretariat.

Annex

United Nations system response

The purpose of this annex, an updated extract from the report of the Secretary-General to the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, is to give a brief summary of responses to HIV/AIDS under way or anticipated by United Nations system organizations and agencies.

United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF has set the following programme priorities:

(a) To ensure that all young people know the facts about HIV and how to prevent it. This includes programmes for injecting-drug users, on the control of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and youth life skills, and on lifestyle promotion;

(b) To support efforts to expand access to services to prevent parent-to-child transmission of HIV, which includes clearer guidance on the use of antiretroviral therapy and infant feeding in the context of prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) projects, access to voluntary counselling and testing, and the reduction of stigma and discrimination for women living with HIV;

(c) To provide care and support by strengthening programming for orphans and vulnerable children infected/affected by AIDS and by expanding life skills training for young people. In this context, UNICEF is positioning schools as the hub in every community in the struggle against AIDS. It is working with ministries of education to dedicate time and attention to the introduction of life skills into the curricula and learning of young children. It is also negotiating with the private sector for low-cost supply of essential HIV/AIDS-related drugs;

(d) To protect young people and women from HIV in situations of conflict and emergency;

(e) To support UNICEF staff members affected by HIV/AIDS, which includes a core set of services for UNICEF staff and dependants.

UNICEF has integrated the above-mentioned priorities into all of its programming at the country level and globally. It is in the process of stepping up its response in the key areas of prevention of mother-to-child transmission and care and support for children infected/affected by HIV. It is also paying particular attention to the new flashpoints for the pandemic — the Commonwealth of Independent States/Baltic countries, South Asia and the Caribbean — besides its ongoing work in Africa and South-East Asia.

United Nations Development Programme

HIV/AIDS is one of UNDP's main corporate priorities. The role of UNDP is to help countries address the governance challenge of the epidemic, focusing on four areas of intervention:

(a) Promoting robust and action-oriented advocacy for leadership at all levels, political commitment and the mobilization of actors and institutions well beyond the health sectors;

(b) Helping countries to develop capacity for action and to plan, manage and implement their response to the epidemic, including the integration of HIV/AIDS into poverty reduction strategies, and the reallocation of resources (including debt relief savings) towards prevention, care and impact mitigation;

(c) Promoting a human rights framework and gender perspective in all aspects of the response;

(d) Providing special assistance to the worst affected countries to help mitigate the impact on human development, establish governance structures and provide essential services. As coordinator of United Nations system activities at the country level, UNDP also plays a pivotal role in ensuring a coherent and mutually reinforcing response by UNAIDS co-sponsors, bilateral donors and private foundations, through the United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

United Nations Population Fund

The UNFPA contribution to combating HIV/AIDS derives from its long experience and expertise in negotiating and ensuring access to family planning services globally, a precedent in enabling UNFPA to address sensitive issues with national counterparts, including Governments. Since the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), by ensuring access to reproductive health services and programming for female and male condoms, working through its extensive network of field offices and technical experts in the country support team, UNFPA has been at the forefront of prevention activity and programming.

Within the UNFPA policy framework, prevention of STIs, including HIV, continues to be an integral component of reproductive health. At the country level, UNFPA works closely with United Nations partners, international agencies and national counterparts to provide assistance for STI and HIV/AIDS prevention. Such support includes advocacy, education and information for the promotion of safe sexual behaviour, including voluntary counselling and testing; improving access to and use of condoms; training of reproductive health-care providers on HIV prevention in relation to family planning, antenatal and safe delivery practices; and research on the integration of HIV prevention into reproductive health programmes and socio-demographic consequences of the epidemic. Meeting the needs of youth and adolescents forms a special focus of UNFPA support at all programming levels — national, regional and global. Adolescents need the knowledge and life skills to make responsible decisions and positive choices in life. UNFPA is contributing towards this through support in many countries for the development of educational curricula, by including information on reproductive health in general and HIV/AIDS in particular, gender issues, sexuality and family life; improving access to information, counselling and clinical services; promoting greater participation of youth and advocacy efforts, both for girls and boys, based on the key messages of the Conference and its five-year review.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Within the United Nations system UNESCO has been assigned special responsibility for education. Ignorance is a major reason why the epidemic is out of control. The need for preventive education flows from the types of ignorance associated with the epidemic, particularly in the most affected developing countries: the fact that most of those infected do not know it, the sparse knowledge about the disease itself, misconceptions about possible remedies, and faulty knowledge leading to prejudice and discrimination. Hence, preventive education is at the top of UNESCO's agenda. Preventive education must make people aware that they are at risk, and why, and how infections can be reduced. However, knowledge is often not enough to change behaviour.

Preventive education must address mentalities and the cultures within which they are embedded in order to generate the attitudes, provide the skills and sustain the motivation necessary for changing behaviour to reduce risk and vulnerability. UNESCO's priority in preventive education is directed towards five core tasks:

(a) Advocacy at all levels: in particular, UNESCO will engage ministries, agencies and non-governmental organizations under its mandate, such as those for education, science, culture, communication and sports, plus civil society and the private sector;

(b) Customizing the message: development of effective and culturally sensitive messages towards target groups, first for those most at risk;

(c) Changing risk behaviour and vulnerability: promoting education programmes — formal and non-formal — so that all young people know the facts about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it and act on this knowledge in schools that are safe and environments that are protective, particularly of girls;

(d) Caring for the infected and affected: the knowledge, attitude and skills needed to provide care for the infected and affected are a vital part of any programme in preventive education. Care providers must be actively engaged and supported in their efforts to address the epidemic in communities around the world;

(e) Coping with the institutional impacts: the increased demands for care and the loss of professionals stretches already overburdened health and education systems. Hence a critical task is to protect the core functions of key social, economic and political institutions under the onslaught of HIV/AIDS.

UNESCO will therefore develop and disseminate tools for monitoring, assessing and responding to the impact of the epidemic on schools, students, teachers and other key institutions at the country level.

United Nations International Drug Control Programme

UNDCP objectives related to HIV/AIDS are to prevent the spread of the epidemic linked to the abuse of drugs; undertake community outreach projects; develop legislation; and integrate demand reduction efforts into broader social welfare and health promotion policies. UNDCP has supported the development of projects in five Central Asian countries to strengthen their capacity in policy formulation, planning and the management of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and drug abuse prevention. A subregional project in the southern cone of Latin America promotes common methods and standards to conduct epidemiological surveillance. UNDCP is participating in the regional response to the problems created by the spread of the abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants and HIV/AIDS in Central and Eastern Europe and, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, has developed country projects to assist Governments in coordinating and managing HIV/AIDS, STDs and drug-abuse prevention and care activities. In East Asia, the development and implementation of policies and programmes for a community-based response to support demand reduction and prevent the spread of HIV through drug injection is also a priority.

World Health Organization

WHO is intensifying its support for member States' efforts and is doing so within the context of the wider multisectoral response to HIV, reflecting the overarching importance of good sexual and reproductive health. The priorities for intensified action now include support for countries' efforts to prevent and manage sexually transmitted infections; provide voluntary counselling and testing through health services; implement and monitor interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV; ensure care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS; and implement other cost-effective interventions, relevant to specific settings. Particular attention is paid to the interests of populations who are at high risk or are especially vulnerable, including sex workers and injecting drug users. WHO continues to recognize the importance of meeting the particular needs of young people and gives special attention to relieving the impact of HIV/AIDS on health systems (including the particular HIV infection risks experienced by health workers). Thus, WHO priorities include supporting and coordinating high-quality research on HIV/AIDS, providing technical support for programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and surveillance of HIV infection and its behavioural determinants. In some cases, support is provided through links with programmes on reproductive health, essential drugs, disease surveillance, the provision of health information, vaccine development, blood safety or substance use.

WHO has strengthened its normative functions and the technical capabilities of WHO regional and country teams. Regional and country offices are focusing particular attention on strengthening the health-sector responses to the epidemic and have prime responsibility within the United Nations system for issues related to care and support of people living with HIV/AIDS and for the availability of prevention and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. WHO regional offices are recruiting specialists to act as focal points for specific areas of work, including voluntary counselling and testing, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and other essential components of HIV/AIDS work; the coordination of HIV activities within health systems; and surveillance (with an emphasis on behavioural issues). Additional qualified staff, including national programme officers, are to be placed in countries. Subregional technical teams are being established to provide direct support to countries and facilitate the management of regional technical networks.

WHO is also developing a global health-sector strategy for responding to the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections as part of the United Nations system's strategic plan for HIV/AIDS

for 2001-2005, as requested by the World Health Assembly in its resolution WHA53.14. The process includes wide consultation with Governments, non-governmental organizations, WHO regional offices and country representatives, collaborating centres and experts. The global strategy proposes three main tactics: reducing the risks of HIV infection; decreasing people's vulnerability to HIV infection; and lessening the epidemic's overall impact on people's lives and on development.

World Bank

The World Bank has made HIV/AIDS a top institutional priority, both for analysis and action. The Bank placed HIV/AIDS at the centre of the global development agenda during the April 2000 meetings of world finance ministers, detailing the severe threat the epidemic poses to development around the world. It has expanded the economic analysis of the impact of AIDS and, in collaboration with the UNAIDS secretariat, has produced detailed estimates of the costs of mounting comprehensive national HIV/AIDS programmes. It has taken a leading role in initiatives to help bring an HIV vaccine to market in the developing world and is one of the UNAIDS co-sponsors involved in the accelerating access initiative to make antiretroviral drugs more accessible in poor countries.

The Bank has also increased its support for HIV/AIDS programmes. In September 2000, it launched the first phase of the multicountry AIDS programme for Africa. Prepared in collaboration with UNAIDS, the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa, key bilateral donors and leading non-governmental organizations, the programme is designed not only to increase resources for HIV/AIDS but also to address the key impediments to an expanded response, such as slow implementation and inadequate support to communities. The first phase of the programme has made $500 million in credits available to countries in Africa to step up national prevention and care and treatment programmes and to help them prepare to cope with the impact of AIDS. Programme resources may be used to support initiatives by government, civil society, the private sector and communities; special mechanisms have been designed to ensure that funds flow quickly to the community level. To date, the Bank has committed $300 million of the $500 million and has started to prepare for the next phase, which will be for another $500 million. The Bank has prepared a similar initiative for the Caribbean, which will be presented to the Board in June 2001. This is in addition to support to several other countries, including Brazil, China and India.

International Labour Organization

The focus of the ILO is on the development of workplace policies and the implementation of a global technical cooperation programme on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. At the global level, an effort is being made to apply ILO concepts and methods, developed on labour and social issues, to HIV/AIDS. An international code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work is expected to be adopted in May 2001, to provide legal and practical guidance on developing workplace policies, especially for protecting fundamental rights at work. Programme priorities include the application of a "social vaccine" for prevention and protection, such as social inclusion and income and job security; strengthening activities against the virus through improved knowledge; documenting and disseminating information through effective labour market information systems; eliminating the stigmatization and discrimination attached to HIV/AIDS by adopting and applying ILO international labour standards; integrating HIV/AIDS into existing social security schemes and developing new ones. Initially, action by the ILO has mainly focused on Africa and the implementation of an African platform of action on HIV/AIDS; in addition, ILO global programmes now include country-level activities in Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Central Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Key activities carried out in the context of the global programme focus on promoting awareness and developing strategies concerning the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work, and documenting and disseminating information on national experience; incorporating workplace policies into national action plans against HIV/AIDS; integrating HIV/AIDS issues into all ILO programmes at the national and enterprise levels, particularly with respect to combating discrimination and social exclusion; and mitigating the adverse social and labour consequences of HIV/AIDS.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

In response to the HIV epidemic, FAO contributes its technical expertise in sustainable agriculture and rural development and is developing strategies through which the agricultural sector can address HIV/AIDS. With UNAIDS, FAO will undertake integrated prevention programmes that will help spread information, especially to young men and women, about HIV vulnerability, risk reduction and sustainable rural development. It is exploring ways of assisting farming communities in rural areas with high HIV prevalence and of developing agriculture programmes that modify mobility patterns to reduce the vulnerability of migrants to HIV infection and develop strategies that focus on prevention.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The objective of the Office in the area of HIV/AIDS is to contribute to an effective and sustainable human rights-based response to the epidemic at the national, regional and international levels by enhancing the integration of HIV/AIDS issues into the human rights machinery. It advocated the inclusion of HIV/AIDS on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights and its Subcommission; has widely distributed the international guidelines on HIV/AIDS and human rights to States, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations; and has contributed to increasing political support for HIV/AIDS initiatives through the adoption of Commission on Human Rights resolutions on HIV/AIDS and human rights. Programme priorities include strengthening respect for human rights as part of the response to the epidemic, reducing HIV/AIDS-related discrimination at work and elsewhere by engaging persons infected and affected in promoting, protecting and respecting human rights within prevention, control and care programmes. The Office will advocate for the implementation of HIV/AIDS-related rights of populations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS so that the vulnerability of those populations to human rights violations and exposure to HIV is reduced. Together with UNAIDS, it will continue to organize training sessions on human rights in the context of HIV for experts within the United Nations human rights system and other relevant partners, such as Governments and non-governmental organizations.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR programme priorities addressing HIV/AIDS include the strengthening of the STI and HIV/AIDS prevention and care component of reproductive health programmes in refugee settings and capacity-building of UNHCR staff and partners in the design and implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention and care activities. It also disseminates information (i.e., best practice packages and guidelines) and advocacy on HIV/AIDS prevention and care needs of refugees through international, regional and national forums. UNHCR priority geographical regions are the Great Lakes region and West Africa.

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Recognizing the undeniable importance of the HIV/AIDS epidemic affecting the world today, the Institute prepared an issues paper on HIV/AIDS and development at the invitation of the UNAIDS secretariat during 2000. During the biennium, UNRISD began to form a network of well-known researchers (social scientists, activists and medical specialists) with an interest in further work on HIV/AIDS. The Institute's goal in this field is to generate new knowledge about the course and consequences of the epidemic and new ideas on how to strengthen the capacity of particular societies to deal with HIV/AIDS.

United Nations Volunteers

The main focus of UNV in the area of HIV/AIDS is the strengthening of local initiatives for prevention and control of the epidemic through community-oriented, participatory involvement. UNV also strives to alleviate the devastating socio-economic effects of the pandemic by disseminating HIV/AIDS information and by providing training and general health care. Together with the UNAIDS secretariat and UNDP, it has launched a pilot project, unique in the United Nations system, by engaging people living with HIV/AIDS as national United Nations volunteers to

work in their own communities. The project helps to set up women's support groups for orphans of HIV/AIDS and their foster parents; provides technical assistance so that local communities can produce their own publications on HIV/AIDS; and trains co-workers to manage HIV laboratory operations. UNV programme priorities and targets include building government and community capacity in relation to information, education and communication skills for HIV prevention; providing loans to sex workers; and training community caregivers for orphans in Africa and Asia and the Pacific, its priority geographical regions.

World Food Programme

WFP is working towards incorporating HIV/AIDS concerns into all of its programmes, both development and emergency. WFP concentrates on using food aid as a way to improve the food security of HIV/AIDS-affected families and orphans. In collaboration with its partners, WFP will also incorporate information, education and communication activities at its distribution sites through community partners, such as relief committees.

At the headquarters level, WFP is developing a strategy and guidelines to integrate HIV/AIDS into all existing and new programmes. At the field level, WFP will programme mitigation activities, including school feeding with take-home rations for families with orphans; food rations for tuberculosis patients undergoing therapy; and vocational/agricultural training for street children and orphans. Current pilot interventions also include using WFP's extensive logistics network to support HIV/AIDS education and risk-reduction activities for contracted transport workers.

United Nations Development Fund for Women

The reality that the epidemic is fuelled in a major way by gender relations and gender inequality has led UNIFEM to expand its work on gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS. The Fund's three priority areas — strengthening women's economic rights, engendering governance and leadership, and promoting women's human rights — are all essential strategies in this effort. In keeping with its mandate to be catalytic, innovative and to support inter-agency mechanisms for mainstreaming gender, the UNIFEM programme for action on gender and HIV/AIDS includes work on advocacy, brokering partnerships and capacity-building.

UNIFEM views women's empowerment and gender equality as essential entry points for work on stemming the HIV/AIDS epidemic. All of the organization's development initiatives are shaped by that goal, and UNIFEM is able to bring its experience and the experience of mainstreaming gender to support of the work on HIV/AIDS at the inter-agency level.

UNIFEM is currently moving into phase II of its global programme, "Gender-focused responses to the challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic", which was funded in large part by UNAIDS and UNFPA. UNIFEM is currently developing programmes and strategies to ensure the integration of gender dimensions into a broad programme of action designed to link policy, research and outreach strategies on gender and HIV/AIDS in order to build bridges of support, advocacy and activism at the non-governmental organization, community, national and regional levels. Drawing on the findings and results, the programme will advocate for engendering all national HIV/AIDS plans and initiatives at the policy level.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNIDO aims to contribute to the reversal of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on rural and urban livelihoods. Within the framework of the UNIDO integrated programmes being implemented in several countries, major initiatives have been taken to mobilize the private sector/business community, including women entrepreneur groups, to support HIV/AIDS-specific activities, focusing on awareness creation, prevention and survival. In response to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa and in accordance with the development objective of supporting the developing countries in their efforts to accelerate socio-economic development, UNIDO will address the issue of HIV/AIDS at the global forum level and with appropriate technical assistance programmes, preferably with the support of the international private sector, especially those with interests in Africa. It

intends to undertake action-oriented studies on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the private sector, including enterprise-level surveys, with a view to defining realistic strategies and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS awareness and "business against AIDS" prevention campaigns into the UNIDO network of industrial support institutions and enterprises. In addition, technical assistance programmes will focus on building capacities and capabilities for the production of AIDS-related health products, including support to plant-derived pharmaceutical research and pilot programmes in southern Africa and elsewhere.

United Nations Secretariat

The Division for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, in its coordinating capacity, acts as the focal point for the United Nations Secretariat on HIV/AIDS. The Division for Social Policy and Development is undertaking a study on families in the most HIV/AIDS-affected countries, and HIV/AIDS will be a topic in one of the working groups of the World Youth Forum, to be held from 5 to 12 August 2001 in Senegal. The Population Division includes HIV/AIDS in official United Nations population estimates and projections in order to assess the extent of the epidemic. In order to contribute to further understanding of the increasing proportion of women living with AIDS in every region, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and among younger age groups, the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with WHO and UNAIDS, convened an expert group meeting on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its gender implications in Namibia in November 2000. The Commission on the Status of Women repeatedly discusses women and HIV/AIDS whenever it reviews the critical area of women and health. The increasing proportion of women living with HIV/AIDS was raised in Commission resolution 44/22 on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations cooperates with the Civil Military Alliance to combat HIV and AIDS, developing training programmes and educational materials for military and other personnel assigned to United Nations peacekeeping operations. HIV/AIDS is becoming part of the meeting agendas of the regional commissions, and the Economic Commission for Africa convened the Second African Development Forum in December 2000, on the theme "AIDS: the greatest leadership challenge". The results of the Forum will serve as a valuable input to the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS. The Department of Public Information raises public awareness on the epidemic and its effects through radio, television and printed matter. The United Nations Medical Service ensures the implementation of United Nations policies on HIV/AIDS for staff members worldwide of the United Nations common system and their dependants, and guarantees compliance with the 1991 United Nations policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace and as policy for peacekeeping missions. Key priorities are access to treatment and care, development of regional facilities, greater diffusion of health education materials and information, building confidence of staff by raising awareness, training, conferences and health fairs, and extending training courses for physicians and nurses to update their knowledge.

World Intellectual Property Organization

WIPO is responsible for the promotion and protection of intellectual property throughout the world and for the administration of various multilateral treaties dealing with intellectual property. WIPO provides expert legal advice and technical assistance in the field of intellectual property and seeks to ensure that an equitable balance exists between public health concerns and the interests of intellectual property rights owners. WIPO has provided its expertise in consultations concerning access to care.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UNRWA's current priorities concerning HIV/AIDS include the education of vulnerable groups, such as youth at school, vocational training centres, women's programme centres and surveillance of STDs and HIV/AIDS. This is carried out by training health staff on counselling for prevention and control and the production of educational kits for schoolteachers and students. UNRWA is represented in the national AIDS committees in the host countries and areas of Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Palestine.

World Tourism Organization

The World Tourism Organization serves as a global forum for tourism policy and issues. It addresses HIV/AIDS issues in the context of its mandate through its international campaign against organized sex tourism, specifically against child sex.

World Trade Organization

WTO is undertaking work on the issue of access to medicines, including those that treat HIV/AIDS. One of its bodies, the Council for Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), will hold a special discussion of intellectual property issues relevant to access to medicines at its session scheduled for the week of 18 June 2001. WTO is also working on liberalization of obstacles to trade in pharmaceuticals and on transparency of governmental procurement procedures.

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The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development

The role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

Recent African initiatives for renewal and growth and for African ownership of its own development, together with the improved policy environment in many countries, provide a sound basis for building a real partnership between Africa and the international community to put the continent on the path to sustained growth and improved living conditions for its people. The United Nations system must play a key role in forging such a partnership. The challenge is to build on African ownership and sound economic policies. This can be done with an adequate mix of resources flows, debt relief and much-improved market access for African exports, combined with support for the diversification of the region's economies and the replication of success stories being implemented by or in collaboration with the United Nations system. The United Nations system is committed and ready to do its utmost in supporting the implementation of an integrated African-owned initiative to tackle the multiple challenges facing the region.

* E/2001/100.

** The present report aims to support the discussions of the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segment on the role of the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development. It should be read in conjunction with the conference room paper (E/2001/CRP.3) on this topic, which provides details on the operational activities of the United Nations system in Africa in line with the priorities found in the Cairo Agenda for Action and other recent Declarations of the Organization of African Unity.

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I. Policy conclusions and recommendations

1. The Secretary-General welcomes the recent initiatives to formulate a framework for Africa's economic and social development, being spearheaded by several African leaders. It is the Secretary-General's ardent hope that agreement will be reached on developing a single, integrated framework at the Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in July 2001. The United Nations system is committed and ready to do its utmost in supporting the implementation of an integrated initiative to tackle the multitude of challenges facing the region. The Secretary-General will ensure that the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system is further strengthened to ensure that its programmes reinforce and support the objective of achieving the targets set out in the Millennium Declaration. The Secretary-General will also ensure that the appropriate strategic direction continues to be provided to avoid duplication of efforts and a proliferation of initiatives, which do not correspond to the goals and plans being formulated by Africa's leaders themselves.

2. The 2001 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council is an important occasion to give impetus to the efforts of the United Nations, the United Nations system and the international community at large, to better support African-owned development. The following conclusions and recommendations are submitted to assist in the Council's deliberation.

- The United Nations has a key role to play in supporting the efforts of African countries in achieving durable peace and sustainable development. It has played an important role in easing the transition to independence, helping these countries to put in place the requisite institutions and supporting their efforts to solve conflicts. The United Nations has kept the issue of Africa's economic recovery and development at the top of the international agenda, ensuring that, in addressing poverty eradication and sustainable development, attention is focused on the special needs of Africa. In addition to advocacy, the United Nations comparative advantage lies in policy development and advice culled from the best practices from its global store of knowledge from all regions.

- The United Nations system is thus uniquely placed to help to create the momentum for a renewed international partnership between Africa and the international community, rooted in the commitment of African leaders. The main tenets for this partnership must be substantially increased official development assistance (ODA) flows to the region, broader and deeper debt relief, and much-improved access to markets.

- There should be a better integration of United Nations system support with national development policies and programmes and a shift of inter-agency coordination increasingly to the regional level as key means to help to advance African leadership and ownership. Multilateral and bilateral partners with regional and subregional programmes should work closely with the United Nations system, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the OAU to support initiatives for regional and subregional integration.

- There should be a further reinforcement of system-wide support for capacity-building in Africa, which should proceed in parallel with the development of comprehensive and coherent responses to crises that effectively combine peace-building, emergency assistance and longer-term development support measures.

- The United Nations Resident Coordinators and Country Teams should assist Governments in particular in ensuring consistency and harmonization of the country programming framework of the United Nations and of the Bretton Woods institutions. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should further strengthen their framework of cooperation, based on their respective competencies. To diminish the reporting and coordination burden on recipient countries, the Council could encourage the use of common country assessments (CCAs) by bilateral development cooperation agencies as well as the alignment of rules and procedures for programming used by all partners.

- Resources must urgently be mobilized to help to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases and to strengthen health systems in the context of a broad development approach where

health sector reforms go hand in hand with poverty reduction and community participation.

- Building on the encouraging signs of progress to date, the United Nations system should play a more active role in encouraging public-private partnerships. In addition to the proposed public/private Global Fund for HIV/AIDS and health, public-private partnerships could play a role in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, in natural gas exploration and development, in infrastructure development, in education and in conflict prevention and peace-building.

- African Governments need to continue their efforts to improve governance, to build accountable, transparent public institutions and to strengthen civil society organizations (CSOs). This will enhance their ability to develop their own development strategies, facilitate the broad-based participatory processes that engage all national stakeholders in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national poverty reduction strategies and give credibility to greater domestic ownership of development assistance.

- The ability of the United Nations system to respond to the priority needs of African countries will ultimately depend on whether sufficient resources are made available to the system for operational activities. The Council could invite donor countries to substantially raise their voluntary contributions to United Nations Funds and Programmes for their activities in Africa.

- The need for donor countries to increase the volume and efficiency of ODA remains of paramount importance and should be reiterated. The Council could reiterate its call to implement expeditiously the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and appeal to the international community to help African countries to find a lasting exit from their external debt situation. Flexible and innovative debt relief strategies should be applied for countries emerging from conflicts. The organizations of the United Nations system should intensify their support to African countries' reforms to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

- In partnership with African countries and development partners, the United Nations system should support national and regional strategies for diversifying African economies. The United Nations should advocate for new trade rules that are conducive to diversification and foster food security. Likewise, it should help African countries to meet existing global quality standards for traded goods, but, at the same time, the range of standards imposed on products from developing countries in general and Africa, in particular, requires further examination.

- The Council could express its readiness to assist the General Assembly in monitoring the Millennium Declaration goals pertaining to Africa, notably on poverty eradication and sustainable development, debt relief, market access, ODA, FDI and transfer of technology.

II. Overview

A. The present situation in Africa

3. Africa's political, economic, social and environmental predicament is well known — the majority of countries in the region enter the twenty-first century as the poorest, least developed and least technologically advanced in the world. In the 1990s, conflicts and HIV/AIDS compounded the region's long-standing challenges and earlier limited gains were reversed. In all other developing countries, GDP per capita rose by an average of over one third during the decade, but in Africa it fell. Although accounting for 18.5 per cent of the world's population, the region produces only 3.5 per cent of global GDP and accounts for only 1.5 per cent of global exports. Africa receives less than 2 per cent of global FDI, but, in relation to GDP, it is the most externally indebted region in the world.

4. Despite these long-term difficulties, in the past few years the economic performance of some countries in the region has given cause for a greater degree of optimism. Circumstances and performance vary widely among countries but, despite the weak commodity prices of the past few years, some countries have begun to grow at rates, which, if sustained, would achieve the target of reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015. For the majority that have avoided conflict, there has been

a general improvement in domestic economic management and prospects for faster growth have improved.

5. The experience of Africa in the 1990s has demonstrated that peace, democracy, economic freedom and development are inseparable. Problems and weaknesses of development and democracy have been important ingredients in the conflicts that have arisen and the conflicts in turn have derailed development, and not only in the countries immediately involved. As the security situation in the region deteriorated, international assistance had to be channelled increasingly into peace keeping and humanitarian activities rather than longer-term development programmes. Bilateral and multilateral flows of ODA to Africa declined from $23.4 billion in 1994 to $15.3 billion in 1999. While the role and presence of the United Nations system in Africa has expanded dramatically during this period, there has been an overall decline in resources available for the United Nations operational activities for development, and the system's expenditures on development assistance to African countries fell by more than a quarter between 1992 and 1999.

6. Peace, democracy and development in Africa have to be pursued in an integrated and mutually reinforcing way with the support not only of the United Nations system but also of other partners in the international community. This was an underlying principle behind the Security Council's two Ministerial Meetings on Africa in the 1990s. The first, in September 1997, led to the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council and the General Assembly on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318). The second, in January 2000, addressed the threat to international security posed by HIV/AIDS. In addition, the Security Council has sent a number of missions to Africa, including the mission to Sierra Leone which also visited Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Nigeria (see S/2000/992) and the mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region. Most recently, with the endorsement of the Security Council, the Secretary-General sent an Inter-agency Mission to West Africa (see S/2001/434).

7. The General Assembly itself has been following and guiding the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General, as reflected in the report of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (A/55/45)[1] and in General Assembly resolution 55/217. While recognizing the indivisibility of peace, democracy and development, the present report focuses on the development dimension, the area of responsibility of Economic and Social Council.

8. There is a global moral and ethical imperative to ensure that Africa's decline is reversed but, in embarking on this task, all concerned Africans and their Governments, international agencies, bilateral donors and the international and domestic private sectors have to ensure that they have learned from past mistakes. In looking to the future, it is essential to recognize, despite the poor performance to date and the sombre assessments, that there is significant potential for sustained growth and development in Africa. The recent experience of some countries which have resumed faster trends of growth and poverty reduction illustrates the positive impact, on social and economic performance, of democratization, of using natural resources as sources of export revenue and economic activity, and of applying these resources to expenditures on health, education and infrastructure and to diversifying exports. The challenge before African countries and peoples and the international community is to ensure that growth and poverty reduction permeate the continent.

9. One source of optimism on this score is the evolution in political leadership in many countries and the increasing willingness of the leaders and their populations to accept primary responsibility for their country's and the region's development. There is a new candour among African leaders in analysing the region's problems and renewed emphasis on collective action and accountability. An emerging consensus among African leaders on a common vision for the future is increasingly accompanied by efforts to harmonize and integrate their actions and to assert ownership of their development processes. Within many countries, political liberalization, more participatory forms of government and an improved relationship between the state and civil society, including the business community, have led to the adoption of more effective economic policies. In most African countries, budget deficits, trade deficits and inflation have been reduced and the domestic policy environment has changed significantly as a result of, inter alia, sounder domestic economic policies, trade

liberalization, privatization, pricing and marketing reform, and a more favourable attitude to the private sector, particularly FDI. These reforms have contributed importantly to the improved performance in a number of economies in the region in recent years.

10. Reflecting the international attention being devoted to Africa, there is a multiplicity of multilateral initiatives for the region. However, these often result in duplication and unnecessary competition, including competition for resources, which diminish their impact. African countries are increasingly weary of the proliferation of such initiatives. Moreover, while there may be differences in priorities and in assigning responsibilities for future actions, there is a large degree of similarity among the key themes of these initiatives.

11. African leaders themselves are increasingly taking the lead in articulating regional development initiatives. In 1995, they adopted the Cairo Agenda, which identified a number of regional priorities. In May 2000, they reached the long-desired goal of establishing an African Union. At present, the Presidents of South Africa, Nigeria and Algeria are spearheading an initiative for economic and social renewal known as the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the President of Senegal is developing the Omega Plan for Africa. The joint conference of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Planning, convened by ECA in Algiers from 8 to 10 May 2001, underlined the need for a single, integrated initiative to be adopted by the OAU Summit in Lusaka in July 2001. The United Nations system, including the ECA, stands ready to provide support for the implementation of the integrated initiative that will emanate from the regional processes.

12. While African countries, individually and collectively, bear the main responsibility for action on and implementation of their vision, the international community has an obligation to do its part to help them in their efforts. The initial elements of a renewed partnership between Africa and the international community — rooted in the commitment of African leaders to act together to promote effective policies and more comprehensive support from the international community — are there to tackle the challenges of the region.

13. In Africa, domestic savings alone will be inadequate to achieve and sustain the higher rate of economic growth necessary to meet the Millennium Declaration target of halving the poverty rate by 2015. To enable Africa to achieve this target, the basic foundation for the renewed partnership must therefore be substantially increased ODA flows to the region, broader and deeper debt relief, enhanced FDI and much-improved access to markets. Faster growth itself should attract further inflows, opening a virtuous circle.

14. Increased ODA, debt relief and market access should be treated in a comprehensive framework for financing development. ODA must be more effectively and efficiently utilized and focused on the causes of poverty in the region if the prospects of increasing it are to improve materially. Trade and diversification are also critical tools for enhancing development prospects. For trade to do its part, much more needs to be done to extend market access for all goods from African countries by further reducing tariffs and removing tariff escalation in order to encourage diversification. Additionally, greater efforts are needed to assist countries in taking advantage of market openings and to attract more FDI. The International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in 2002, should address the special concerns of Africa in these areas.

B. The role of the United Nations system

15. In line with the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, the United Nations system has a key role to play in forging a new partnership for African renaissance and growth, both through its intergovernmental processes and in its operational activities.

1. General Assembly

16. In the 1980s, particular attention was focused on the region with the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD), succeeded by the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) in 1991. Since that time, all the global conferences of the United Nations have referred to the special needs of Africa and/or the 49 least developed countries (LDCs), 34 of which are in Africa. These high-level pronouncements culminated in chapter VII of the Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2), on meeting the special

needs of Africa. On that occasion, world leaders challenged the United Nations system to strengthen the broad range of its engagement in Africa with a view to intensifying support for poverty eradication and sustainable development, for combating diseases and pandemics and for the process of conflict prevention and consolidation of democracy and made the following commitments:

- To give full support to the political and institutional structures of emerging democracies in Africa.
- To encourage and sustain regional and subregional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability, and to ensure a reliable flow of resources for peacekeeping operations on the continent.
- To take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced Official Development Assistance, and increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment, as well as transfers of technology.
- To help Africa build up its capacity to tackle the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases.

17. One of the responsibilities of the General Assembly, as called for in resolution 55/162, will be to monitor implementation of the Declaration, including the foregoing commitments regarding Africa. Because a key contribution of the international community to the future development of Africa will lie in the increased provision of, or access to, external resources, the Assembly may wish to give particular attention to monitoring progress in this regard as part of its monitoring of the Declaration.

18. In addition, the evaluation of UN-NADAF which the Assembly has scheduled for 2002 will provide an initial opportunity not only for a comprehensive intergovernmental review of developments in Africa over the past decade but also to adjust policies and practices in the light of the lessons learned.

2. Economic and Social Council

19. At the Millennium Summit, world leaders resolved "to strengthen further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter". The responsibilities of the Council include, within its areas of competence, enhancing policy coherence and consistency and promoting international cooperation and coordination, particularly among the organizations of the United Nations system. The development challenges facing Africa are multifaceted and interlinked and are therefore an area where these aspects of the Council responsibilities are particularly pertinent.

20. Moreover, in its resolution 55/217, the General Assembly expressly requested Economic and Social Council to "consider ... the creation of an ad hoc advisory group on [African] countries emerging from conflict, with a view to assessing their humanitarian and economic needs and elaborating a long-term programme of support for implementation that l ins with the integration of relief into development".

21. Greater use should be made of the Council as a forum for dialogue on matters pertaining to Africa, especially regarding policy coherence and coordination. In the first instance, as part of its overall contribution to monitoring the follow-up to the Declaration, the Council may wish to assist the General Assembly in monitoring the implementation of the specific goals pertaining to Africa in the Millennium Declaration (see para. 17 above), including those pertaining to poverty eradication and sustainable development, debt, market access, ODA, FDI and transfer of technology. The inclusion of a section specifically on Africa in the Millennium Declaration reflects in part the fact that Africa faces special challenges and is likely to be the region where the attainment of the overall goals of the Declaration is most difficult. Similarly, the diversity of the region and of the actions required will make reporting on progress more complex. The Economic and Social Council could assist in this process and could report to the General Assembly as an input into the latter's overall assessments of progress towards the implementation of the Declaration.

3. System-wide support for African development

22. The United Nations system undertakes operational activities in every country in Africa. These activities embrace almost every aspect of development, with the specific mix depending on the system's resources and the needs of each country. As indicated above, the system's activities in Africa and of issues

related to their coordination and harmonization is presented to the Council in a conference room paper (E/2001/CRP.3). The activities of the United Nations system are increasingly guided by common approaches, particularly the objective of reinforcing African ownership of programmes and projects. The renewed international effort to accelerate development in Africa should build on African leadership, political commitment and ownership, both within individual countries and across subregions and the region. The diversity of development challenges in the region should be acknowledged and countries should be given the opportunity to translate Africa-wide approaches into priorities and strategies that accord with their specific country situations.

23. The United Nations has been a key source of external financing for sub-Saharan Africa and the region is the largest recipient of United Nations development assistance. However, as with bilateral ODA, United Nations assistance has been declining both in nominal and real terms because of cutbacks in voluntary contributions to core resources of the various United Nations Funds and Programmes. Over the period 1992-1999, just as African countries were facing their greatest challenges, particularly in the social sector, United Nations development assistance to Africa fell by 26.5 per cent, hampering the ability of the system to respond to the priority needs of these countries.

24. The decline in United Nations assistance was sharpest for the period 1992-1996 when it fell by 33.2 per cent. While there was an increase of 10 per cent for the period 1996-1999, it is still far below its 1992 level. A number of activities have been brought to the point where adequate financial assistance is critical to effective implementation; however, funding, including core resources, has not kept pace with the demonstrated needs. As part of the commitment to reach the internationally agreed development targets in Africa, donor countries should raise their voluntary contributions to United Nations Funds and Programmes.

25. It is imperative for the system to unite in support of an Africa-owned and Africa-led framework of action based on the rationalization and concordance of existing initiatives. Such a unified framework would enable the system to utilize its scarce resources more effectively; would facilitate monitoring of the system's performance in support of priorities established by Africans themselves; and should encourage donor countries to meet their commitments to Africa.

26. To strengthen system-wide support for the development and implementation of such a unified framework, the ACC at its first regular session of 2001, held in April in Nairobi, recommended the following steps:

(a) A comprehensive review and appraisal of existing United Nations system initiatives on Africa;

(b) Utmost restraint within the system in launching new initiatives until the completion of the forthcoming review of UN-NADAF;

(c) Promotion of bilateral donors' engagement in this rationalization effort and in the consolidation of initiatives;

(d) Utilization of the evaluation process of UN-NADAF as an important occasion to promote mutually supportive actions and engagements by all parties to the comprehensive and coordinated approaches advocated in the report of the Secretary-General entitled, "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/52/871-S/1998/318) and the Millennium Declaration;

(e) Further reinforcement of system-wide support for capacity-building at the national level;

(f) Shifting the focus of inter-agency coordination increasingly to the regional level as key means to help to advance African leadership and ownership; and

(g) Engagement in a deliberate strategic effort to promote better integration of the African agenda with other agendas, from peace-building and poverty eradication to trade and finance, and ensuring, in particular, that forthcoming United Nations events, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, maximize their support for African progress.

27. As an integral part of these efforts, the United Nations system is committed to intensifying its cooperation with and support for regional and subregional bodies in Africa. Other multilateral and bilateral partners with regional and subregional programmes should work closely with the OAU and the United Nations system, particularly the ECA, to

support initiatives for regional and subregional integration.

28. In accordance with the principle of national ownership, the organizations of the United Nations system should continue to respect the prerogative of African Governments to decide on the utilization of the resources available to them. Under the leadership of Governments, joint programming should be used as a modality at the country level to enhance collaboration and coherence of all United Nations system activities in Africa. The United Nations Resident Coordinator should assist Governments in ensuring consistency and harmonization of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In order to enhance coordination and maximize the impact of their development assistance, the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should further strengthen their framework of cooperation, based on their respective competencies and comparative advantages.

29. As proposed by the ACC, bilateral donors should join the United Nations system in enhancing coherence and coordination of development assistance in recipient countries by using the same policy frameworks and aligning rules and procedures for programme planning and implementation. Country-level approaches should be deepened and carried out by streamlined thematic groups covering key sectors to support Africa's priorities. To reduce transaction costs for recipient Governments, bilateral donors should use the CCA to promote policy coherence and join thematic groups.

30. In several countries in Africa, Governments are utilizing sector-wide approaches, for example, in health, education and agriculture. These approaches foster country ownership and donor coordination because they require that all partners support the single policy thrust articulated in the Government's own sectoral programmes. Within this framework, there should be a clear division of labour among all partners, including all bilateral and multilateral partners and civil society, according to their mandates and competencies.

31. Despite some 50 years of experience in development cooperation, donors' extensive and diverse procedures continue to impose a burden on recipient countries, diverting scarce resources from directly productive activities. The costs of reporting and coordination requirements often outweigh their potential benefits. As the largest recipient of ODA, Africa has the largest burden of dealing with the multiplicity of donor procedures, but the least administrative capacity to do so. In order to reduce this burden, all bilateral and multilateral partners should harmonize their programme cycles in each country with those of the recipient Government, should align the rules and procedures they use for programming amongst themselves and should streamline and harmonize their procedures for implementation. The United Nations system and the Resident Coordinator system should be proactive in these matters by harmonizing procedures among its own agencies, funds, programmes and other entities.

III. The challenges of sustainable development in Africa

32. A broad picture of the region suggests that, as the twenty-first century began, Africa was at an economic and political turning-point. The majority of countries had begun to pursue more appropriate economic policies, which contributed to reducing underlying macroeconomic imbalances and improving the environment for private sector activity. The implementation of these economic policies was generally accompanied by political liberalization and a movement towards democratic governance, which helped to improve the relationship between the state and civil society. These policies have led to an improved domestic economic environment and greater economic stability in the countries pursuing them and, since the mid-1990s, economic performance has improved.

33. Nevertheless, there remains wide diversity in the region. A group of 14 countries with a higher degree of political and macroeconomic stability and less distortion in their financial sector, are potentially in a position to "take-off" within 15 years. Of them, a limited number (5) grew at 7 per cent or above in 1999, which, if sustained, would reduce poverty by half by the year 2015. Too many countries, however, continue to grow at less than the rate of population growth (2.8 per cent) and are therefore failing to increase per capita income. In war-torn countries, growth prospects have

sharply declined for there is a serious deterioration in basic living conditions for the majority of their population.

34. Africa has still not been able to attract adequate levels of either local or foreign investment. Worse, Africa's place in the global economy has been eroded and the region stands in danger of being excluded from the information revolution. Although accounting for 18.5 per cent of the world's population, the region produces only 3.5 per cent of global GDP and 1.5 per cent of global exports, with declining export shares in traditional primary products, little diversification into new lines of business, and massive capital flight and loss of skills to other regions.

35. The gains made in human development in the 1960s and the 1970s are being reversed by HIV/AIDS and old scourges like malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. At 41 per cent, the illiteracy rate is high compared to the rest of the world and inadequate to meet the challenges of an information-based globalizing economy. Demographic growth also remains high in most countries and, despite the expected high-level of premature deaths due to HIV/AIDS, there are 20 countries in the region where the population is expected to double in 35 years. Furthermore, through the rapid exodus of rural populations to the continent's cities, Africa has the largest rate of urban population growth in the developing world, putting increasing stress on social services, institutional and physical infrastructure. The persistence of political instability and armed conflicts has also posed a major challenge for several countries. Despite a few successes in the numerous efforts to resolve many of these conflicts, durable peace remains an elusive goal for some countries.

A. Improving governance and preventing conflict

36. The 1998 report (A/52/871-S/1998/318) highlighted the diversity and complexity of the sources of conflict in Africa. Key among such sources highlighted in that report are insufficient accountability, lack of transparency, inadequate checks and balances, and non-adherence to the rule of law. The reliance on highly centralized forms of governance and the politics and the politicization of religious, ethnic and other differences, and exclusionary practices based on these differences, have also contributed to creating an environment for conflict to escalate to armed violence. Conflicts have also been fed by competition over mineral and other natural resources, often fanned by outside economic interests.

37. A range of responses and resources is required, both in the short and longer term, and both from within and outside Africa. In the short term, the recommendations of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (Brahimi Report) (A/55/305-S/2000/809), are being implemented with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in the region. In the long term, the United Nations system, with the support of the international community, should assist African countries in engaging in proactive conflict prevention. Although only a limited number of countries in Africa are currently experiencing armed conflict, the conditions that precipitate violence, such as poverty and exclusion, are present in many of them. Peace-building is one of the key tools of prevention that can be applied to pre-conflict and post-conflict countries and would therefore be relevant and useful in a significant number of them. The instruments of peace-building are also wide and varied and can be fine-tuned to the specificity of the situation. These instruments typically include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, human rights education and national reconciliation but also embrace improved governance, building accountable, transparent institutions, including strengthening civil society organizations and their role in development, and the creation of productive employment and income-generation.

38. An effective way for the United Nations to assist African countries in the area of peace-building is to combine peace-building, emergency assistance and longer-term development support measures in a comprehensive and coherent response. This can be most effectively done at the subregional level. Africa's domestic disputes all have regional and subregional dimensions, from arms and refugee flows to the overt or covert interventions of neighbours. In most of the subregions of Africa over the last two to three decades, large movements of refugees have put enormous pressure on infrastructure, the environment and the scare resources of countries receiving them, including more recently West Africa, the Horn of Africa, as well as Central Africa. Given that political instability and conflicts continue to undermine the success of national

development programmes, including the success of United Nations activities in the field, an integrated subregional approach to conflict prevention and peace-building for economic and social development is urgently required.

39. The Inter-Agency Task Force on West Africa, created to take stock of the priority needs and challenges of the subregion, undertook a mission to the region in March 2001 and recommended, among other things, that a United Nations subregional office for West Africa be established. Building upon this recommendation, other United Nations subregional offices could be created. These offices could assist the United Nations system in setting integrated policies and strategies for implementation, ensure the harmonization of United Nations system activities in the political, security, human rights, humanitarian and development areas, lend support to national and subregional peace-building efforts, promote the integration of a conflict-prevention dimension in national and subregional activities and provide support to subregionally owned initiatives. The implementation of this recommendation would be a concrete demonstration of how the integrated approach described in the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) could work.

B. Mobilizing resources for eradicating poverty

40. The eradication of poverty is a complex and difficult task because it is multidimensional in nature, affected by and impinging on domestic political and economic policies, natural disasters, environmental pressures, and the international environment. The stakes are enormous because poverty creates the conditions where conflicts easily escalate into violence. In Africa, unlike other regions where the rate of poverty is falling, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty is rising, with approximately 52 per cent of people living on less than $1 per day. In this context, reducing poverty is the biggest development challenge facing African countries in the quest for durable peace and sustainable development.

41. The Millennium Declaration target of reducing poverty by half by 2015 would require African countries to grow, on average, at a rate of 7-8 per cent per annum. With a domestic savings rate of 18 per cent (compared to a desired rate of 25 per cent), African countries will be unable, in the short term, to mobilize the resources required to achieve this rate of growth from their savings. Against this backdrop, a number of measures will have to be taken to mobilize external resources in the short to medium term. The 1998 report on Africa identified five priority areas that would help in this regard, namely, the conversion of remaining bilateral debt into grants for the poorest African countries, the widening of the HIPC Initiative to benefit more countries, encouraging private investment in Africa, increasing the volume and improving the quality of ODA and keeping markets open.

1. Debt relief

42. One important source of financing for poverty reduction is debt relief. With the present value of debt as a proportion of the exports of goods and services exceeding 200 per cent for most countries, the region's debt is unsustainable. For this reason, the United Nations continues to strongly support all efforts for debt relief. While the Enhanced HIPC will provide relief, it is imperative that African countries find a lasting exit from their external debt situation if they are to meet the growth requirements required to reach their development goals. The cancellation of debt for the poorest countries could also be considered to allow them to concentrate their resources on poverty reduction programmes.

2. Foreign direct investment

43. Unlike in some other developing countries, particularly in Asia and Latin America, private capital flows have not contributed to filling the resource gap in Africa. Because of Africa's perceived riskiness, it has been largely marginalized from international private capital markets over the past decade. In 1999, Africa attracted only $10.3 billion, or 5 per cent of the total flow of $207.6 billion in FDI to developing countries. The challenge for African countries is to engender confidence in their economies, including by ensuring greater transparency, accountability and the rule of law. African countries need to strengthen key institutions, such as the civil service and the judiciary, so as to establish the requisite environment for attracting private resources. They should also improve infrastructure, strengthen financial intermediation, and upgrade human capital. A number of United Nations

organizations are currently involved in a number of projects to support these goals but more needs to be done to replicate the good practices from other regions.

3. Official development assistance

44. Given that the majority of African countries are unable to attract adequate private flows, ODA will continue to be the most important source of financing for development. Recent evidence shows that foreign aid has a strong, positive effect on a country's economic performance if the country has put in place appropriate policy and structural reforms. However, despite robust economic growth in industrial countries improving policy environment in many African countries in recent years, the volume of ODA to sub-Saharan Africa has continued to fall, from a high of $15.7 billion in 1992 to $11.4 billion in 1999 and per capita from $32 in 1990 to $18 in 1998. In addition to increasing ODA, coordinating its delivery and untying it from procurement in donor countries would help to improve its effectiveness. Five donor countries — Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden — are currently meeting or exceeding the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA. The entire donor community should support these efforts by increasing the volume and efficiency of assistance, targeting it to those areas that can provide a catalyst to development, especially capacity-building and infrastructure support.

4. Market access

45. African countries need improved access to the markets of key countries if they are to diversify their economies and develop. While some concrete initiatives to improve market access were announced at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, a combination of continued protection, subsidies, quality and technical standards imposed by importing countries means that access to international markets remains difficult. African countries still face high tariffs on some exports, such as textiles and clothing and some agricultural products, in which they have a comparative advantage. In some cases, the rules of origin for some imports give countries little flexibility and little room for manoeuvre in trying to expand their exports. This has the effect of denying preference even though it formally exists.

46. The range of standards imposed on products from developing countries in general and Africa in particular, especially those that exceed internationally accepted regulations, should be re-examined. A recent World Bank study[2] showed that the "precautionary principle" in food safety standards used by one of Africa's main trading partners will save 2 lives for every 1 billion people and could cost 9 African countries $700 million in lost exports. In addition, industrialized countries spend more than $300 billion a year on agricultural subsidies (roughly equal to the GDP of sub-Saharan countries and 20 times larger than the amount of ODA they receive). This question requires further examination. At the same time, the United Nations should do more to help African countries meet global quality standards for traded goods.

C. Food security and increasing productivity in agriculture

47. Agriculture is fundamental to sustainable development in Africa because of the size of the agricultural sector and the extent of rural poverty, hunger and malnutrition. As the region that is home to most of the world's poorest countries, it is not surprising that Africa is also the most undernourished. According to FAO projections, sub-Sahara Africa will be the region furthest from reaching the target of halving the number of malnourished people by 2015. Higher productivity in agriculture can promote economic development and reduce hunger and malnutrition through several channels: by increasing food production and lowering food prices; by improving nutrition and increasing labour productivity; by increasing incomes and generating employment; by creating demand for manufactured goods and services; by providing labour and capital for the development of other sectors; and by earning foreign exchange.

48. Agricultural productivity is low in Africa and agricultural output per capita has been stagnant for three decades. In addition to environmental degradation and lack of access to water in arid and semi-arid regions, one of the main reasons for the poor performance of African agriculture is the absence of a green revolution. The Green Revolution in Asia was made possible by an international publicly financed research programme that developed high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice, which responded very well to fertilizers and controlled water management. These varieties were, however, not very suitable for Africa's conditions regarding climate (e.g., variability of rain),

soil and diseases. There is a need to focus research on the development of drought-resistant, low-risk and low-cost innovations for rainfed food agriculture. Biotechnology has a crucial role to play in this regard.

49. A number of other examples already exist of work being done by United Nations agencies or in collaboration with them, that if replicated, could make a difference to food security and poverty reduction. As noted in the conference room paper (E/2001/CRP.3), the development of New Rice for Africa (NERICA) by the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA), by crossing Asian and African rice species, has resulted in a new rice which can grow in dry conditions, resist pests and tolerate nutrient deficiency like the African species while producing relatively high yields like the Asian species. Other development partners could support the replication of NERICA in other subregions and offer tax incentives to firms undertaking research in other staple crops. The work being done by the IAEA and FAO to create tsetse-free zones in sub-Saharan Africa is also making an important contribution to increasing agricultural productivity in rural areas. The tsetse fly, which transmits sleeping sickness, kills livestock, depriving small farmers of the use of these animals for draft power. Support to control this vector, found only in Africa, would be a useful contribution to reducing rural poverty.

50. In April 2000, the Secretary-General established the Inter-Agency Task Force on the United Nations Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa. In October 2000, the Task Force launched a 10-year strategy to respond to the cycle of famine and under-nourishment in the Horn of Africa. It is anticipated that country food security programmes will be put in place by mid-2001 in the countries concerned. A regional food security programme to address broader issues such as conflict resolution and trade will complement country programmes. The World Bank has agreed to coordinate resource mobilization for the implementation of the strategy.

51. In addition to replicating these good examples, improving agricultural productivity in Africa will require investments in education and infrastructure and the development of institutions that provide credit, inputs and extension services. The development of these institutions, in combination with land reforms in certain countries will enhance the prospects of the rural non-agricultural sector. Developing agro-based industries would also help to enhance productivity in the agriculture sector and improve the prospects for food security in the region.

D. Diversifying Africa's economies

52. African countries are, on average, rich in natural resources and therefore possess the basis to structurally transform their economies. By increasing the volume and value of production and trade, countries can narrow the resource gap for financing development. An effective way to increase the value of production and trade is to process the region's abundant primary commodities, moving into higher value-added resource-based industries, concentrating on those products for which there is rising demand. An industrialization strategy that focuses on labour-intensive manufactured exports would also directly address the need for remunerative and productive employment, reducing both absolute and relative poverty and securing peace and stability. By developing other sectors, including manufactures and services, diversification could also help to cushion internal and external shocks.

53. Although the new rules-based system opens up possibilities for diversification, African countries confront a number of problems in managing globalization and improving prospects for diversification. Regional integration is one way to enhance the prospects for diversification in the short to medium term. By spreading the costs of common infrastructure (transport, telecommunications and energy), and in permitting greater economies of scale, African countries can reduce the high costs of production. Widening the market also expands the pool of entrepreneurial talent and relevant skills, and attracts FDI. This is an opportune moment for the United Nations, in partnership with African countries and development partners, to support national and regional strategies for diversification.

E. Rehabilitating infrastructure

54. One critical task with respect to diversification is the rehabilitation of infrastructure. Over the last two decades, a combination of economic crisis and/or civil war, in addition to poor maintenance, have contributed to the deterioration of physical infrastructure in many

African countries. The high transaction costs related to unreliable and expensive power supply and telecommunications and poor transport infrastructure have undermined the development of productive capacities of African economies, contributing to the marginalization of the region in world trade, finance and investment. It has also contributed to a poor supply response to structural adjustment policies and the failure to diversify. Because of its capital-intensive nature, rehabilitating and modernizing the region's transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure will be possible only by joining forces with the private sector, including from other developing countries which have made great strides in this area. The United Nations should intensify its efforts to help build infrastructure.

F. Strengthening human capital

55. One of the greatest challenges to meeting national development goals in Africa is the precarious state of human capital. Generating growth in a knowledge-driven economy requires that the labour force be healthy and skilled, able to adapt the new technologies to the needs of national development as well as innovate. Recent reversals in the substantial progress achieved in health and education over the last half century suggest that the challenge will remain a daunting one.

1. Health

56. Africa is currently facing a disease burden of historic proportion; this is contributing to poverty while at the same time being exacerbated by poverty. Hunger and malnutrition leave people more vulnerable to disease and are contributing to the re-emergence of preventable diseases, putting pressure on already depleted national health budgets. Diseases like malaria, sleeping sickness, lymphatic filariasis, yellow fever, dengue, dengue haemorrhagic fever and river blindness associated with Africa's climatic and ecological location continue to keep productivity low. Malaria alone kills 1 million people each year, but also has staggering economic costs. A study by the Center for International Development at Harvard University[3] shows that countries with intensive malaria grew 1.3 per cent less per person per year and that a 10 per cent reduction in malaria is associated with 0.3 per cent higher growth. Overall, the study shows that Africa's GDP would be up to 32 per cent greater if malaria had been eliminated 35 years ago.

57. The case of HIV/AIDS is particularly alarming, threatening the social and economic fabric, and the political stability, of whole nations. An estimated 25.3 million Africans are living with HIV/AIDS and there are currently over 10 million young people orphaned by AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. By overwhelming Africa's health and social services, by creating millions of orphans, and by decimating health workers and teachers, AIDS is causing major social and economic crises. Life expectancy among sub-Saharan Africans is now expected to drop by 15 years by 2010 in some countries. Other development indicators, such as education levels and economic development, have similarly been affected throughout the region. One of the key outcomes of the African Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases, held in Abuja, Nigeria, in April 2001, was the commitment by African countries to allocating at least 15 per cent of their annual budget to the improvement of the health sector with an appropriate amount for the fight against HIV/AIDS. Since a substantial portion of the African population uses traditional medicine for ailments ranging from mental illness to HIV/AIDS, it is vital that African Governments integrate traditional medicine into their national health systems.

58. The Secretary-General has taken personal leadership of the campaign against HIV/AIDS in Africa, working with African and donor Governments, the pharmaceutical industry and foundations to put in place a global strategy to confront the greatest challenge to Africa's development. The Secretary-General has recently appointed a Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa to support African leaders and the United Nations in the fight against HIV/AIDS. He has proposed the creation of a global fund for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, with some of the funds being devoted to the strengthening of health systems. Without functioning health systems, proven and effective health sector interventions cannot be effectively implemented. In addition, supporting and strengthening health/medical research institutions in Africa, including research into traditional medicine is an urgent priority. Easing the disease burden in Africa will require a very broad development approach where health sector reforms go hand in hand with poverty

reduction, conflict prevention, and community participation, particularly of women.

2. Education

59. At a time when information and skills and the ability to manipulate them have become a source of wealth, African education is in crisis. The latest available data show that the primary gross enrolment ratio is still below the level reached in 1970, an indication of the deterioration of public services generally and education in particular. Only about 10 countries have achieved universal primary education. Secondary and tertiary enrolment is also far below that of other developing regions. Far from being a tool for the social and economic transformation of the region, African education systems have found it increasingly difficult to provide even basic schooling. Furthermore, the quality of education is generally viewed to be poor and the curricula irrelevant to the needs of the new global economy. Despite the need for a strong scientific and technological capacity, Africa has only 20,000 scientists and engineers, or 0.36 per cent of the world total; its share of scientific publications is 1.5 per cent while that of patents is close to zero.

60. The Millennium Declaration reconfirmed the commitment made at the World Education Forum in Dakar, April 2000, that the basic learning needs of all children, young people and adults, wherever they may live, will be met by 2015. The challenge of meeting these goals is greatest in Africa. As many as 22 countries in the region are unlikely to reach the target of universal primary enrolment by 2015 unless serious action is taken; in 7 of these countries, around half of all children of primary age are currently not in primary school. In 12 countries, primary enrolment has increased over the decade, but at a rate that will be insufficient to ensure that all children are in primary school by 2015. It is estimated that possibly 30 per cent of those currently not in primary school will never learn to read and write.

61. Often built on a weak physical and institutional base, education systems in many African countries are vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters that have hindered progress and, in some cases, even rolled back the achievements already won. HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts and poor economic management continue to have devastating effects on education in Africa. One of the troubling by-products of these problems has been the emigration of skilled manpower from the region. According to the ECA, Africa lost 60,000 professionals (doctors, university lecturers, engineers, etc.) through emigration in the period 1985-1990 and has since been losing an average of 20,000 skilled professionals annually. This situation reinforces the need for improved governance on both the economic and political fronts as well as special measures to encourage the return of skilled Africans to the region. The United Nations will also expand the work that has begun to develop the region's indigenous scientific knowledge, such as the medicinal uses of plants, so that it can be exploited for the region's economic benefit. New and innovative measures also have to be taken to ensure that African countries reach the international development goals in education. The Brazilian Bolsa-Escola (school bursary) programme, which provides a stipend to families to send and keep their children to school, and has shown results in other countries where it has been tried, should be replicated in low-enrolment countries in Africa. In addition, the United Nations and other development partners should support regional centres of excellence for research and development, also encouraging the regional specialization of academic training in order to maximize synergies and resources.

3. Expanding public-private partnerships

62. Strengthening human capital for Africa's sustainable development will require a coordinated effort, including public-private partnerships to mobilize financial, technical and other resources in support of community-based interventions. Globalization has brought with it the possibilities for more effective partnerships with civil society, including the private sector and foundations. Global private flows far exceed ODA and the value of the assets of some of the richest individuals far exceed the GDP of some of the poorest countries.

63. The United Nations has already begun to extend its partnership network to global civil society, including foundations, the private sector and NGOs, to mobilize around what can be considered global public goods, including health, education and technology. In the health sector, the United Nations system, led by WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF and the World Bank, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI), the Medicines for Malaria Venture, the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development, as well as the United Nations (Ted Turner) Foundation and the Bill

and Melinda Gates Foundation, is mobilizing private sector resources to finance the development of vaccines and drugs. In education, the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford, Rockefeller and MacArthur Foundations have joined together to launch a $100 million initiative known as the "Partnership to Strengthen African Universities", in support of higher education in a number of sub-Saharan African countries. The United Nations will seek to broaden and expand these partnerships to include other sectors, including technology, specifically to help African countries to bridge the digital divide.

64. The United Nations remains committed to continuing to play a leading role in assisting African countries to achieve sustainable development and to ensuring that the special needs of the region remain at the top of the international agenda. It welcomes the new consensus that the efforts of all development partners be devoted to implementing African-owned and African-led initiatives and programmes. In this regard, because of its historical role in the region and its comparative advantages, it can facilitate and coordinate the support measures that are now being put in place by traditional and new partners for development, including the private sector and foundations. In doing so, the United Nations will endeavour to more effectively build national capacity and institutions so that the region can fully assume the ownership of its development.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/55/45).

[2] Tsunehiro Otsuki, John S. Wilson and Mirvat Sewadeh, "Saving two in a billion: A case study to quantify the trade effect of European food safety standards on African exports", Development Research Group (World Bank, 2000).

[3] John Luke Gallup and Jeffrey Sachs, "The Economic Burden of Malaria", CID Working Paper No. 52, July 2000 (see http://www.cid.harvard.edu/cidwp/052.htm).

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Global campaign for poverty eradication

Note by the Secretariat

1. The General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, decided to "place poverty eradication at the centre of economic and social development and build consensus with all relevant actors at all levels on policies and strategies to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015, with a view to eradicating poverty".[1] It furthermore invited the Economic and Social Council "to consolidate the ongoing initiatives and actions established in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) and the recommendations contained in the [outcome of the twenty-fourth special session] with a view to launching a global campaign to eradicate poverty".[2]

2. The goal to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day was reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its Millennium Declaration (see Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000).

3. The recommendation of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly concerning the launching of a "global campaign" to eradicate poverty is extremely wide-ranging in scope. Two broad components, on the basis of which the Economic and Social Council may wish to articulate its action, are implied in the recommendation: first, the "consolidation" of relevant initiatives and activities by the international community; and, second, the launch of a major advocacy effort. As outlined in the present note, the first component calls for the United Nations system to take the lead in enhancing the coordination and coherence of its own activities, in relation to both its data-gathering and analytical work and its operational programmes. With regard to the second, the system can play, at all levels (global, regional and national), a supportive but nonetheless important catalytic role.

4. The present note focuses on approaches and measures being developed within the United Nations system to prepare the ground for the actions that the Economic

* E/2001/100.

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and Social Council may wish to take pursuant to the recommendation of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. It draws largely on relevant aspects of the outcome of the most recent session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), held in Nairobi in April 2001. The session addressed the matter in the light of proposals by the newly established ACC High-level Committee on Programmes, which has made the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration within the system a central element of its work programme. The proposals of the High-level Committee, in turn, built on previous work initiated within the framework of the United Nations Development Group and endorsed by ACC, for the elaboration of an Action Strategy for the United Nations on Halving Extreme Poverty (ACC/2001/CP/INF/4). That strategy identified priority areas for the United Nations system's poverty eradication programmes; outlined arrangements for strengthening the coordination of country-level action; and advanced a range of proposals for advocacy around the goal of poverty eradication.

5. The present note should be read in conjunction with the annual report of ACC for 2000 (E/2001/55), which outlines approaches to the role and contribution of the system to the follow-up to the commitments and goals of the Millennium Declaration, in particular as they relate to poverty eradication and development.

Internalization of poverty goals and consolidation of activities

6. As noted above, an important element in a global campaign to eradicate poverty will be for the United Nations system to further improve the effectiveness of its own actions to help Governments achieve and monitor progress towards the poverty-related goals set out in the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session and the Millennium Summit.

7. A critical condition in this regard is to improve and refine the data available through the system on poverty and its various dimensions. Improved data is needed to provide a common basis for the analysis of the causes of poverty and remedies, and as a condition for more focused and targeted programmes. The organizations of the system are fully committed to supporting Member States in this regard, both through technical cooperation in support of national statistical capacity-building efforts, and in connection with intergovernmental reviews of progress achieved in reducing poverty globally, in the context of reporting coordinated by the United Nations on the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. The statistical capacities of the system are being mobilized, through the relevant coordination arrangements of ACC, to contribute in a sustained and coherent way to these processes, in line with relevant intergovernmental directions.

8. Apart from the improvement of statistical capacities and data, discussions at ACC highlighted the need for the poverty paradigm to be broadened — beyond the numerical target of reducing the number of people living on less than one dollar per day — to encompass a range of social, economic, educational, nutritional health and cultural dimensions as well as the important dimension of the empowerment of the poor. This was considered extremely important to ensure a lasting impact and truly global progress and, insofar as the United Nations system is concerned, to promote the active contribution and focused involvement of all its agencies and programmes in the overall effort to substantially reduce global poverty.

9. All ACC members acknowledge the imperative of integrating poverty eradication goals in policy development and programming processes throughout the system, and of "internalizing" the poverty reduction goals embodied in the Millennium Declaration. In this regard, ACC recommended, as an integral component of the system's contribution to the global campaign, that each organization, in the context of its mandate, undertake an analysis, to be shared, as required, with its governing body, of the contribution of its programmes to the poverty reduction goals. It was considered that such analyses could usefully distinguish between (a) programmes and activities directly targeted at the poor, such as microcredit; (b) broader programmes in, for instance, health or education, that contribute to improvement of the conditions of the poor and to their empowerment; and (c) measures that affect the enabling environment for poverty eradication (such as trade and market access and debt relief). Complementing such analyses, an annual review of flows of concessional funding allocated to different programme components of the global campaign, to be conducted by the World Bank and other funding entities, was recommended. These programmatic analyses and reviews would, in turn, provide the basis for the development of a system-wide framework within which relevant initiatives and activities could be introduced and placed in relation to each other, thus helping to identify gaps and to promote mutual reinforcement and the most effective sequencing of interventions.

10. Enhancing the overall coherence of the system's activities also requires reinforcing linkages between analytical work and operational activities. This needs to be pursued within each organization as well as at the inter-agency level. At the level of the system as a whole, measures are being pursued to further strengthen interactions among United Nations system officials involved in analytical, statistical and programme planning work relevant to poverty eradication. As part of this effort, ACC is taking steps to establish an electronic network of such officials, which should also be open, as appropriate, to the participation of external partners. One of the contributions of this network should be to help deepen the system's understanding of a number of strategic issues that cut across the mandates and activities of different organizations and require further reflection and study. Among such issues are approaches to poverty alleviation in post-conflict situations, and strategies to deal with vulnerabilities engendered by the interrelationships between environmental degradation and poverty and other aspects of human security, as they affect overall poverty eradication strategies.

Advocacy

11. The poverty eradication objectives set by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session and the Millennium Declaration are extremely challenging and current trends are far from encouraging. Their realization will require, at all levels, unfaltering political will to maintain the necessary focus on the agreed goals, and to advance in establishing the conditions and the environment — locally, nationally and internationally — most conducive to concrete and steady progress.

12. A major advocacy effort to engage political leaders and mobilize world opinion in achieving the 2015 target embodied in the Millennium Declaration should be a central component of the global campaign. The challenge is of such magnitude and complexity that it can only be met if it becomes a major focus of the

commitments and engagement of national Governments and the donor community and of all forces in civil society and the private sector.

13. Experience has shown that the system can play a distinct role in generating political support, promoting partnerships and mobilizing resources for global causes of common concern and no cause is more central to the peace-building and development missions of the United Nations system than the eradication of poverty.

14. In the first instance, the system can lend force and credibility to its contribution to the advocacy effort by reinforcing the coherence and effectiveness of its support programme, along the lines outlined above. In addition, the Secretary-General and other executive heads are committed to using every available opportunity, including global gatherings and other major events, to help engage political leaders and galvanize world opinion around the poverty eradication goals of the Millennium Summit. Reporting to intergovernmental bodies can also be utilized throughout the system to highlight on a systematic and ongoing basis issues and policies that impact on poverty and its various dimensions.

15. The public information capacities of the various organizations of the system and relevant coordination arrangements within the framework of ACC can also make a significant contribution to the advocacy component of the proposed campaign. The ACC Joint United Nations Information Committee in particular has been asked to give priority to rallying a concerted system-wide effort to mobilize public opinion and political will in support of poverty eradication and to reflect on the most effective public information and communication strategies to be used by the United Nations and the respective organizations.

16. For the proposed campaign to effectively reach out, the regional and national dimensions of the advocacy effort will need to be given full attention alongside its global components. At the regional level, the regional commissions can make an important contribution to this effort, and the annual regional consultative meetings, held in follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, provide a useful mechanism for systematically following overall progress at the regional level and assessing the impact of the system's contribution.

17. At the national level, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework should serve as the national counterparts of the proposed campaign, with the active engagement and support of both the resident coordinator system and the United Nations information centres. Theme groups have been established in recent years in many countries on poverty alleviation and closely related issues, such as nutrition, health or education. These groups should be used to foster an intensive, continuous dialogue between national authorities and the country team on the action and resource mobilization strategies that can best advance the poverty reduction goals of the Millennium Declaration.

18. The capacity of the Organization to support and coordinate these initiatives and to play effectively its role of facilitator and advocate will obviously require support from the donor community to strengthen the resources it can devote to this challenging task.

Recommendation

19. In launching the global campaign, as recommended by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session, the Economic and Social Council may wish to provide direction for the engagement in this effort of Member States and the international community. It may also wish to note the system's readiness to fully support the global campaign and the various initiatives under way at the inter-agency level, through ACC and its High-level Committee on Programmes, to enhance the coordination and impact of the system's activities, and give further guidance to the system's contribution at the global, regional and country levels. In the same context, the Council may wish to address the role that it would wish the United Nations Secretariat to play in this broader endeavour and call on Member States to extend their full support to this undertaking.

20. The Economic and Social Council may furthermore address its own role in the global campaign, including within the framework of its role regarding the coordinated follow-up to conferences and its functions relating to policy review in operational activities. It may wish to invite the Secretary-General to report to the Council in 2002 on progress accomplished in supporting the global campaign.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fourth Special Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/S-24/8/Rev.1), chap. III, sect. III, para. 25.

[2] *Ibid.*, para. 155.

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda**
Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, and to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on humanitarian assistance, and to subsequent resolutions.

2. The report is also submitted in response to the requests contained in General Assembly resolution 55/164 of 14 December 2000 on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

3. The report documents the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 1998 and 1999 humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council.

II. Overview

4. It is now almost 10 years since the General Assembly adopted its resolution 46/182 with the goal of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations humanitarian operations in the field. Significantly, in the resolution, the Assembly instituted the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the consolidated appeals process.

5. Since 1991, the humanitarian community has increasingly had to operate in rapidly changing and deteriorating humanitarian environments. Internal conflicts have characterized most of the past decade's humanitarian emergencies. However, the world's understanding of and response to them has evolved. The international media can now conduct more or less constant live reporting as disasters and emergencies unfold. This has led to decision makers and the general public being more aware of the devastating and widespread effects of certain crises and has motivated more rapid responses. An unfortunate corollary to this is that countries in crisis not under the media spotlight may struggle to receive the necessary resources.

6. The presence of humanitarian and other international actors in areas of crisis has increased dramatically and the spectrum of their activities broadened. In the 1990s, the United Nations has increasingly been expected to provide assistance in areas affected by internal armed conflicts, through a system that was never designed or staffed to undertake these often ill-fated tasks. In fulfilling their mandates, humanitarian workers have moved ever closer to the conflict and are now frequently surrounded by it in their daily activities, often at great risk and sometimes unacceptably, with fatal consequences. Peacekeeping operations have been launched, sometimes before the existence of any real peace, placing peacekeepers and humanitarians side by side in their efforts to address and mitigate the consequences of conflict. Responses called for by the international community from humanitarians have broadened from providing basic humanitarian assistance, such as food, shelter and health care, to engaging in negotiations with both State and non-State actors for access and the ability to provide assistance to an increasingly targeted civilian population.

7. In many instances, massive forced displacement has become a common feature of the fighting to gain control of territory or resources and has even been an aim in itself in conflicts motivated by ethnic cleansing. The level of violence perpetrated against civilians has reached frightening levels. Rape has become a more common method of warfare. Children are not only caught in the conflict but have increasingly been conscripted into it. Those who are not forced to become combatants are targeted, victimized and displaced with growing frequency. The children that survive do so with less hope of a future with access to basic health services, education, clean water and food security.

8. Since the end of the cold war, warring parties have more frequently used ethnic and religious differences or different interpretations of history to fuel conflicts. As a result, violations of human rights and humanitarian law often lie at the heart of a humanitarian emergency. At the same time, many of these conflicts pivot around the struggle for power, security, resources and even narcotics, which has, in no small measure, contributed to the prolongation of conflicts in many countries and created a "war economy". Equally disturbing is the trend of neighbouring countries being dragged into or implicating themselves in internal conflicts. The multiplication of parties and the resulting several fronts have made it yet more difficult for humanitarian

workers to have access to the civilian population and huge numbers of the vulnerable members of that population are cut off from all forms of assistance.

9. All this has made political solutions difficult to realize, particularly where some elements or key players have found war or instability to be more lucrative than peace. It has also made the humanitarian environment in such countries more dangerous, as many of the players have scant respect for international humanitarian or human rights law or the safety of humanitarian workers. Combined with inadequate State and community structures, weakened or destroyed because of conflict, these political and socio-economic factors have exacerbated the vulnerability of populations by weakening local economic activities and coping strategies.

10. The past decade has also witnessed an exponential growth in the occurrence of disasters. In 1999 alone, there were more than 700 large-scale disasters, resulting in the death of approximately 100,000 people and causing economic losses in excess of US$ 100 billion. While all countries are susceptible to natural hazards, developing countries are much more severely affected, especially in terms of the loss of lives and the percentage of economic losses in relation to their gross national product. Ninety per cent of disaster victims live in developing countries. The cause of the widespread loss of life and damage resulting from natural disasters is linked to the increasing number of people and assets which are vulnerable to disasters. This is owing to a number of factors, including the increased concentration of populations in areas of accelerated urbanization, and poverty, which often forces people to live in geographically unstable locations and in inadequate shelters. The cyclical nature of some disasters has left large populations chronically vulnerable. In other instances, other factors, such as inappropriate land use planning, poorly designed buildings and infrastructure, lack of appropriate institutional arrangements to deal with risk reduction, and an increasingly degraded environment, epitomized by widespread deforestation, are all linked to the current trend towards increased vulnerability.

11. Over the past ten years, the United Nations has become stronger in its responses. The Security Council has become more closely engaged with humanitarian agendas, such as the protection of civilians in conflict, the humanitarian aspect of sanctions, the protection of children in armed conflict, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in conflict and the need to incorporate gender perspectives in peace support operations. The United Nations system as a whole has continued to develop different mechanisms for achieving its humanitarian aims and has explored ways to link the different aspects of its humanitarian mandate into broader development and peace-building frameworks.

12. The response to natural disasters has also been heightened by the engagement of a variety of actors with broad ranging expertise. The benefits of technology have been explored to locate and assist the victims of catastrophe, share information on needs both broadly and rapidly, and ensure efficient deployment of people and resources. Greater effort has gone into strengthening the capacity of regional, national and local authorities in disaster-prone areas to plan and prepare for disaster and thus mitigate its consequences when it strikes.

13. A snapshot of the consolidated appeals process illustrates the increasing number and complexity of humanitarian emergencies during the last decade. When consolidated appeals were first issued in 1994, $1.4 billion was requested to cover 11 complex emergencies. For 2001, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have issued 19 consolidated appeals, covering 24 complex emergencies and 8 drought-affected countries, seeking some $2.8 billion. While not all emergencies have been or are the subject of a consolidated appeal, six of today's crises have been appealed for every year since the consolidated appeals process was introduced. In general, the number of protracted emergencies has grown, meaning that large segments of the population in those countries and regions remain chronically vulnerable and dependent on or in need of outside aid. Huge numbers of people have been displaced several times. Many more have not been able to return to their homes at all for very long periods of time and thousands of refugees have been born in exile, making their eventual integration yet more difficult. This demonstrates that humanitarian assistance is not a solution in itself. It cannot be a substitute for political action.

14. There are many constraints and challenges encountered in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, some of which are well known. A failure to plan early for and improve the transition between relief and development can undo positive short-term results. Without shelter, refugees and displaced cannot return to re-establish their communities. Lack of employment

or economic opportunities hinders already vulnerable populations from again becoming self-sufficient. In post-conflict situations, lack of security or sustainability can plunge societies back into violence. Combatants need to be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated. Without demining, landmines will continue to kill and disable, and to prevent access to important land resources and infrastructure. Although, not all of these issues can be fully addressed by humanitarian organizations, they have an impact on humanitarian operations and thus require linkages with political, military and other actors.

15. Key to the success of humanitarian action is the coordinated efforts of all players, backed by the political will and support of Member States. Member States have continued to be generous in their response both to natural disasters and complex emergencies, not only in financial terms but also in the provision of personnel and technical support. Yet there are significant needs that remain unmet. At the same time, opportunities to develop more efficient and effective responses exist, along with ways to support the most affected countries in preparing for and responding strongly to the crises that afflict them.

16. In the light of the changed and changing humanitarian environment, it is useful to examine whether the tools created 10 years ago by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182 to improve coordination and response in humanitarian crises have adapted accordingly. During the past decade, there has been a greater commitment to coordination. More effort is put into deciding coordination arrangements and many have been regularized. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the consolidated appeals process are key examples. But the response to each crisis identifies new lessons to be learned and there are still many challenges to the coordination of humanitarian assistance to be met.

III. Context and challenges of humanitarian assistance, 2000-2001

A. Natural disasters

17. Natural disasters repeatedly strike many of the same regions and countries in an almost predictable manner. Widespread drought in the Horn of Africa threatened 12.3 million people in many parts of the region, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Severe drought in the first half of 2000 also afflicted much of central and southern Asia, particularly Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the Caucasian countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This resulted in significant losses of livestock and crops and rapid deterioration of health and sanitary conditions. In addition, Afghanistan's Herat province was hit by a cold wave in January 2001. Some 5,000 displaced families, already weakened from a combination of drought and conflict, struggled in difficult and crowded conditions, exacerbated by a severe shortfall in emergency shelter. Many people died, particularly women, children and the elderly.

18. For the second year, Mongolia suffered from a harshly cold winter ("*Dzud*"), which followed on the heels of a severe drought. Over 115,000 herder families were affected by the loss of more than 2 million head of livestock, which doubled last year's toll, resulting in economic disaster for the country and nutritional problems for large segments of the population.

19. Barely one year after devastating floods in Mozambique affected one million people, floods struck the country and its surrounding region again in 2001, affecting a further 500,000 people. In Malawi, too, floods affected some 340,000 people and, in neighbouring Zambia, floods and drought combined to affect 1.5 million people in different parts of the country. Heavy rainfalls in Zimbabwe resulted in overflowing rivers and floods.

20. Adverse weather conditions also overcame many areas of Asia. Massive floods, triggered by the past year's south-west monsoon rains, swept through several countries in south and south-east Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam. Thousands of people died and tens of millions were affected, notably in Cambodia, where more than 2.2 million people (20 per cent of the population) suffered from the worst monsoon floods to strike the country in 40 years. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, longer-term economic problems and continuing poor harvests have been further exacerbated by an ongoing series of natural disasters, namely, floods, drought and tropical storm damage. One third of the population of 22 million

people is now targeted for assistance with food, health care, water and sanitation.

21. Within a period of one month, two powerful earthquakes hit El Salvador in early 2001, affecting about 25 per cent of the total population. Some 1,159 people died and thousands more were injured. As the international community was engaged in addressing the consequences of the first earthquake in El Salvador, on 26 January 2001, a massive earthquake struck the western State of Gujarat in India, surprising the world with its scale. Over 20,000 people were killed and almost 16 million more were affected. The province, which held some promise in terms of economic development, is now weakened by an estimated $4.6 billion worth of damage.

B. Complex emergencies

22. Complex emergencies, resulting from conflict and often compounded by natural disasters, have intensified in many regions of the world. In the past year, an already serious humanitarian situation in the West African subregion of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone worsened because of growing confrontations between government forces and dissident groups. Border attacks by armed groups in Guinea's Parrots Beak area, which had been the temporary home for some 200,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, resulted in massive displacement away from conflict areas. Following the large-scale atrocities and gross human rights violations committed against the resident and refugee populations during the attacks, thousands of people fled back to Sierra Leone, while others were forced to move deeper into Guinea to escape the fighting. The increasing role of armed non-State actors, the transnational nature of their criminal activities, the proliferation of small arms, the ineffective demobilization and reintegration of combatants, the continued recruitment of child soldiers and the use of the population as a "human shield" by the parties to the conflict is a serious threat to regional peace and stability.

23. Afghanistan also witnessed a dramatic deterioration in its humanitarian situation, in which 22 years of internal conflict, punctuated by the worst drought in 30 years, has accelerated the prolonged economic decline and general impoverishment of the people. Over the past year alone, 470,000 people have been added to an already large population that has fled their homes to escape drought and fighting. Among them are 30,000 people who fled the Yakawlang District of Bamian Province in Central Afghanistan, after the Taliban allegedly murdered some 300 civilians in January 2001, who it had accused of supporting the opposition. Human rights violations are rife and there is particularly brutal discrimination against women.

24. The Middle East is also witnessing a humanitarian emergency. Since late September 2000, strife in the occupied Palestinian Territory has led to deaths and injuries and a severe decline in the economy, devastating the living standards of the vast majority of the population.

25. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to suffer from the several differently motivated conflicts being waged in the country. Abuse of political power on a wide scale, including incitements to commit genocide, horrific abuses of human rights, the criminalization of economic activity, the presence of rebel movements and foreign armies, and the proliferation of general banditry, within a context of large-scale impunity, are but a few of the elements that define the existing political and socio-economic environment. An estimated 2.1 million people have been displaced and some 350,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

26. Conflicts also persisted in Angola, Somalia and the Sudan. In Angola, the conflict has escalated with serious ramifications for the neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia and Zambia. In May 2000, fighting again broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which, combined with the drought, resulted in the displacement of over one million Eritreans, of whom some 50,000 fled to the Sudan. In addition, some 60,000 Ethiopians were allegedly deported from Eritrea, joining the 350,000 people already displaced within Ethiopia as a result of earlier fighting.

27. In Burundi, the international community negotiated with the Government to change its "regroupment" policy and dismantle many of the camps more recently established under it. Although the numbers of internally displaced persons living in such camps have been reduced by more than half since the beginning of 2001, the humanitarian agenda continues to be dominated by the plight of some 393,000 internally displaced persons in 217 camps. The lack of resolution on a ceasefire, despite the signing of the

peace agreement by 19 parties, means that the situation remains fragile and volatile. Human suffering is further compounded by the third consecutive year of drought and unprecedented levels of highland malaria.

28. In the Balkans, the United Nations is still dealing with the consequences of a decade of conflicts and general disorder that accompanied the unravelling of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. While conditions in Kosovo generally improved, except for in the minority enclaves, the outbreak of conflict in southern Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia caused new population displacements. These recent events underlined the potential of unresolved political and ethnic tensions to trigger new outbreaks of violence. The humanitarian needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other war-affected persons remain part of a wider spectrum of regional and country-specific political, socio-economic and institutional instability. Similarly, in the Republic of Chechnya, Russian Federation, the United Nations remains engaged in dealing with the consequences of the crisis in the region, complementing the emergency relief being provided by the Government of the Russian Federation. There are approximately 160,000 internally displaced persons in Ingushetia and an estimated similar number in the Republic of Chechnya itself. Elsewhere, Indonesia also continues to encounter long-standing tensions in Aceh, West Papua, Malukus and West Timor.

29. Although the trend in complex emergencies continues to be bleak, there are some cases where humanitarian needs have declined. In the Republic of the Congo, the last of the country's 800,000 displaced persons have been able to return over the past year and begin rebuilding their lives. The signing of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities by Eritrea and Ethiopia on 18 June 2000 (followed by the 12 December peace treaty), allowed the majority of the refugees in the Sudan to repatriate voluntarily, along with over 60,000 old caseload refugees. Some 600,000 persons displaced in Eritrea have also returned to their places of origin, although over 200,000 people remain in camps and some 100,000 continue to reside in host communities. The displaced persons within Ethiopia have also begun returning to their homes, with return rates of more than 70 per cent in selected areas in Tigray being reported by the end of 2000.

C. Coordination and response in humanitarian crises

30. Many of the coordination and response mechanisms rooted in General Assembly resolution 46/182 were originally developed in the context of natural disasters and have been increasingly used and adapted in cases of complex emergencies. This is particularly the case as more and more complex emergencies involve elements of both conflict and natural disaster. Reflecting this trend, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in its own recently changed management structure, has merged its respective branches for natural disaster and complex emergency response.

31. The drought in the Horn of Africa and central and southern Asia, the threat of famine in southern and western Sudan, the floods in Mozambique and Asia, the earthquakes in Latin America and India are obviously not one-time events. These regions have been affected by the same type of disaster several times in the past two decades. In its 1998 and 1999 agreed conclusions, the Economic and Social Council recognized the need for stronger preventive strategies, including strengthening of early warning systems at the country and regional levels to reduce the impact of disasters. It also called for better coordination among United Nations bodies to improve preparedness for and response to such disasters and reiterated the need to enhance local capacities to do the same.

32. To chart the course to better prevention and response, members of the United Nations system, in consultation with affected Governments, have conducted lessons-learned exercises. Such exercises were conducted following the floods in Mozambique and Cambodia, the *Dzud* in Mongolia and the earthquakes in El Salvador and India. Lessons learned have been incorporated into workshops and seminars with a broader national or regional scope, such as the June 2000 Curitiba seminar on disaster response preparedness in Latin America and those conducted by the United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme for United Nations country teams and national authorities. Nonetheless, the learning element in United Nations disaster response must be further strengthened.

33. A recurring theme of these evaluations is the need for strong contingency planning, strengthened national disaster management capacity and disaster response

coordination mechanisms, which include information management as well as regional cooperation. Inter-agency efforts in this regard have included a series of initiatives, such as the inter-agency contingency planning guidelines recently prepared by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to deal with environmental or natural disasters, civil unrest and conflict, or the related refugee outflows and internal displacement. As part of the contingency planning process, United Nations country teams, in consultation with the Governments concerned, jointly analyse the context of a situation, identify possible scenarios and define strategies and objectives for a coordinated, consolidated response. Such planning processes should also involve non-governmental organizations and local actors, thus strengthening links with relevant partners.

34. Following lessons learned from the crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, Kosovo and Rwanda, the United Nations has begun to focus more attention on improved levels of contingency planning and preparedness for complex emergencies. An early response can lead to the mitigation of humanitarian needs and prevent the expansion of the humanitarian crisis. In a conflict situation, significant additional elements must be factored into the response. Security aspects are vitally important. Ongoing experience demonstrates that many humanitarian emergencies are prefaced by escalating human rights violations. Attention to and analysis of these patterns can have important preventative and responsive implications for the humanitarian community. Governmental infrastructure may be so shattered that immediate support is required to enable Governments to effectively lead and engage in the recovery process. This is apart from the longer-term process of generally strengthening State institutions.

35. Inter-agency response efforts for natural disasters have included the creation of regional United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams which have increased the participation of disaster-prone developing countries in the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination system. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs now also has three regional disaster response advisers for Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, respectively. Two more are foreseen for the Caribbean and Central America and for southern Africa. Their role is to provide technical support to United Nations country teams and, through them, to the regional and national authorities, for the preparation of contingency plans and the coordination of natural disaster response. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plans to establish five regional disaster reduction advisers who will be responsible for organizing and implementing effective programme support for national and regional disaster reduction and recovery activities, in terms of policy and strategy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, and financial monitoring and reporting. They will also provide inputs to partnership and alliance building, advocacy and training and will collaborate on all matters related to natural, environmental and technological disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

36. Inter-agency response is also effected through joint missions. In recognition of the deteriorating situation in West Africa, in March 2001, the Secretary-General dispatched a high-level multidisciplinary inter-agency mission to the region as a first step in the United Nations/Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) efforts to develop a coherent integrated strategy. The mission emphasized the need for the international community to help solve critical structural problems, ensure linkages between emergency relief and development initiatives, and provide greater support to civil society initiatives. Based on proposals from Governments, donors and civil society and the mission's own findings, it recommended that a United Nations Office for West Africa be established to support and enhance the activities of ECOWAS and ensure harmonization of United Nations programmes with those of ECOWAS and other organizations in the subregion.

37. In the Horn of Africa, the focused response to the drought successfully averted a famine that threatened millions. The appointment by the Secretary-General of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) as his Special Envoy on the Drought in the Greater Horn of Africa and the establishment of the Office for the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator in Addis Ababa helped to improve relief response capacity and coordination in the region. The positive response of the donor community to the food component of the appeal and the cessation of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea also contributed to alleviating the impact of the disaster in the region.

38. While resourcing food shortfalls for the relief effort was crucial, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy highlighted the importance of interventions in

the non-food sector. Relatively low-cost inputs in the water, health and livestock sectors have a profound impact on the affected people and can allow them to continue the recovery process. Evidence collected by the respective regional ministries of health, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations confirmed that insufficient coping of the local health systems, particularly related to reproductive health and children's health needs, greatly exacerbated the suffering. Member States should note the significant changes that investments in these sectors can bring to large numbers of people.

39. In recognition of the cyclical nature of the disaster in the Horn of Africa, the United Nations has developed regional contingency plans which are regularly updated, based on monitoring of the status of food security throughout the region and a synthesis of early warning information from Governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and donors. The long-term consequences and requirements are addressed through coordinated planning for agricultural rehabilitation, to ensure that vulnerable populations, especially the households that rely on farming or livestock, will be able to restore their livelihoods.

40. The lessons learned from the February 2000 floods in Mozambique pointed to the weaknesses in contingency planning at the national and regional levels. With United Nations support, the National Institute for Disaster Management of the Government of Mozambique set about developing detailed contingency plans for a similar emergency. These were completed before the 2001 floods occurred, resulting in a faster response to the crisis and greater awareness of flood damage among the population and local offices of the Institute. This was aided by activities of the National Water Department, which issued daily reports on river and dam levels and was also able to provide projections regarding the extent of the flooding. Regionally, the neighbouring countries of Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe shared their hydrological information on river levels with Mozambique. Heads of States in the region met to discuss the emergency, which reinforced the need for a strengthened regional preparedness and response capacity. From this grew an initiative by the Southern African Development Community to develop proposals for a regional mechanism for disaster management, to be established within its secretariat. This process is now under way.

41. The accumulated widespread damage caused by the two earthquakes in El Salvador placed enormous strain on the response capacity of the Government and El Salvadorian society. The overall impact increased the population's vulnerability, which may be further affected by the upcoming rainy season and potential mudslides. A United Nations disaster management team is supporting the Government's activities for better response coordination and disaster preparedness. In South America in general, the engagement of national and local actors in disaster response is further aided by the Pan-American Health Organization.

42. In India, national and local governments mobilized as many people and resources as possible to cope with the trail of destruction left by the Gujarat earthquake. The Indian authorities led and coordinated the response, making use of the assistance offered by the international community, such as the expertise of the international urban search and rescue teams. Rescue and relief activities relied largely on a substantial number of local non-governmental organizations and on the active involvement of local communities. A United Nations disaster assessment and coordination team and a United Nations disaster management team also supported the Government in coordinating relief and on-site search and rescue activities, although the former's efforts were limited by insufficient staffing and inadequate resources. Throughout the emergency and in the months following, WHO provided particular support to the national and local health authorities.

D. Chronic vulnerability to humanitarian crises

1. Chronic vulnerability in natural disasters

43. The Economic and Social Council in its agreed conclusions of 1999 stressed the need to reduce the vulnerability of societies in developing countries to natural hazards. Natural disasters usually have devastating effects on both urban and rural populations. The material losses in output, means of production and income generation, and infrastructure are extremely significant, as they undermine the ability of survivors to subsist and recover. This is most prominent in agricultural communities, where the destruction of

crops and livestock results in reduced food security, and all too often in poor health, famine and death. The impact on women's workloads and health can be particularly severe, given their key roles in relation to food crop production and food security in many areas. The promotion of agricultural and rural development is paramount to reducing vulnerability and fostering overall national development and food security.

44. The droughts in Africa and Asia and the cold waves in Afghanistan and Mongolia had severe effects on farming and herding households. In Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP fielded crop and food supply assessment missions to several countries, including Afghanistan, Armenia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and advised the international community on the recommended response. The need for agricultural assistance to protect the livelihoods of both farmers and rural herders was also assessed in Azerbaijan, Jordan, Moldova and Romania and special appeals issued.

45. Chronic vulnerability to food insecurity is the most fundamental development problem in the Horn of Africa, where as many as 70 million people, almost half the total population, are food insecure and seriously undernourished, even in normal rainfall years. Conflict, weak economies, poor governance and the dramatic decline of official development assistance to the region contributed to the seriousness of the emergency. In April 2000, the Secretary-General established an Inter-Agency Task Force on Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa, whose subsequent report presents a broad outline strategy to address the underlying causes of persistent problems in the region, including conflict, natural disasters, the growing imbalance between population and fragile natural resources, food insecurity, extreme poverty, lack of economic growth, ineffective institutions and services and inadequate infrastructure. As women have the key role in food production in the region, incorporation of their perspective will be critical. A regional consultation on its implementation, led by the Governments of the region, will be held in Nairobi in July.

46. In both El Salvador and India, the earthquakes had disastrous impacts on the economy. By contrast, the earthquake that struck Seattle, Washington (United States of America) in February 2000 and was of similar intensity had much less dramatic consequences. This testifies to how efforts in the developed world to mitigate risks significantly reduce damage and the resulting disruption to services and infrastructure. In this regard, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 54/219 of 22 December 1999, promotes the reduction of vulnerability of communities to natural hazards in order to mitigate the loss of life and destruction that results when they strike.

47. In addition to the obvious shorter-term damage, there is increasing awareness that both natural disasters and complex emergencies have significant environmental consequences, which may have important long-term implications for those affected. To address this, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has strengthened its long-standing partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through a joint initiative known as the Environmental Emergencies Service, which manages both man-made environmental emergencies and the severe environmental consequences of natural disasters.

2. Chronic vulnerability in complex emergencies

48. In complex humanitarian emergencies, affected populations often have little or no access to their traditional sources of income for long periods of time, owing to displacement and insecurity. As a result, the economic opportunities needed to sustain a dignified livelihood become more acute, particularly in protracted emergencies where populations are frequently on the move. If natural disaster has also struck, the ability of local communities to support displaced populations becomes severely limited, making large segments of these populations dependent on humanitarian assistance.

49. Prolonged conflict does not lead only to vulnerability in food and economic terms, but also in terms of health. The damage to health and sanitation infrastructure and serious reduction in services also have a profound affect on the community. Vaccination cycles break down, quickening the spread of disease. Worse still, the violence enacted on communities during conflict actually increases the demand for health services and medical treatment, meaning that capacities are overstretched at exactly the time when fewest resources are available.

50. More insidious is the effect of conflict on the spread of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). With rape and sexual violence as a widespread phenomenon of war, HIV prevalence is bound to go up, particularly when women and girls, in many situations, have little potential for protecting themselves from infection. Furthermore, the movement of combatants and the forced displacement of the civilian population contribute to the spread of the disease. By way of example, until 1997, Sierra Leone had a relatively low prevalence of HIV. However, the widespread sexual violence and massive population movements in Sierra Leone have increased prevalence rates significantly in both displaced and host populations. The consequences of HIV/AIDS on the social and economic spheres, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have been devastating, as much of the progress made in those areas in recent decades has been severely undermined, or shattered. The movement of people across borders as a result of massive displacements not only contributes to the spread of the disease but easily renders preventive measures ineffective, particularly as over 80 per cent of those infected are unaware that they are carriers.

E. Key issues in the coordination of humanitarian assistance

1. Protection of civilians in armed conflict

51. As internal armed conflicts proliferate, civilians have become the principal victims. In his second report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, dated 30 March 2001,[1] the Secretary-General states his belief that Member States, supported by the United Nations and other actors, must work towards creating a culture of protection. In such a culture of protection, Governments and armed groups would live up to their responsibilities and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law; the private sector would be conscious of the impact of its engagement in crisis areas; and Member States and international organizations would display the necessary commitment to ensuring decisive and rapid action in the face of crisis. The establishment of this culture will depend on the willingness of Member States to take decisive actions.

52. The primary responsibility for the protection of civilians rests with Governments. Protection efforts must be focused on the individual, rather than on the security interests of the State. Where Governments do not have resources and capacities to do this unaided, it is incumbent on them to invoke the support of the international system. Access to vulnerable populations is a key element to providing protection and is covered in a later section in the present report. Responding adequately where conflicts develop a regional dimension increasingly requires a regional focus rather than a solely country-specific approach of political decision makers. The Secretary-General emphasizes that the challenge of protecting civilian populations can only be met by reaching across traditional lines and creating synergy among all actors, including Governments, armed groups, the United Nations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, domestic civil society (including women, children and youth) and the private sector. In this regard, while working closely with Governments, humanitarian actors on the ground need to engage with armed groups and other non-State actors in a constructive dialogue aimed at facilitating humanitarian assistance.

2. Internal displacement

53. While not a new phenomenon, displacement has become larger, more complex and geographically more widespread over the past decade. Responsibility for the assistance and protection of internally displaced persons rests primarily with the host authority. The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions of 1999, called upon all States to apply internationally recognized norms with regard to internally displaced persons, and further called for the strengthening of international coordination efforts on their behalf.

54. In July 2000, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed to establish a Senior Inter-Agency Network on Internal Displacement. The Network, comprising senior focal points in all concerned organizations, was mandated to carry out reviews of selected countries with internally displaced populations, and to make proposals for an improved international response to their basic needs. Representatives of the Network visited Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia from October 2000 to May 2001, and confirmed that there are serious gaps in the United Nations humanitarian response to the needs of internally displaced persons, which require urgent attention. In response, the capacity of the Office

for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will be strengthened to support the response of the operational agencies to the needs of internally displaced persons through the establishment of a small, inter-agency, non-operational Internally Displaced Persons Unit to advise the Emergency Relief Coordinator on and ensure an improved coordinated response to the needs of internally displaced persons. The Unit will be staffed by a small number of persons seconded from the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Extrabudgetary resources will be sought.

55. The Unit will support and complement the advocacy efforts of the Secretary-General's Representative on Internally Displaced Persons. In the past year, the Representative further raised the profile of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the global crisis of displacement through country missions, dialogue with Governments and other actors, his advocacy role and through research undertaken by his office, examining specific issues that emerge during crises of displacement. For example, in the past six months, the guiding principles have been reflected in a Constitutional Court decision in Colombia, new legislation on the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons in Angola and in legislation soon to be introduced in Georgia on voting rights for the internally displaced.

3. Gender

56. Since 1997, it has been the policy of the Economic and Social Council to mainstream attention to gender perspective in all areas of the work of the United Nations. Following this, it has been the policy of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee explicitly to integrate a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance and, in May 1999, it endorsed the policy statement on gender. Integrating the gender perspective requires an adequate gender analysis of each situation, before humanitarian responses are planned, and an awareness that, both during and after the crisis, gender roles and responsibilities may have changed. Although it is recognized that women and girls have particular needs and problems in conflict and post-conflict situations, it is important that women be seen not only as a vulnerable group, but also as key actors and agents of positive change.

57. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has also focused on the provision of support to United Nations country teams to bring the situation of women and girls to the attention of the international community. The 2001 consolidated appeals process was launched globally under the theme "Women and war". The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is currently reviewing the guidelines and training tools for the consolidated appeals process to ensure that they carry appropriate "mainstreamed" messages concerning gender. The review directly incorporates Member States' suggestions on gender mainstreaming. The Committee's electronic resource package, which was launched on International Women's Day 2001 and posted on ReliefWeb, will assist humanitarian coordinators and field staff in mainstreaming gender into the 2002 consolidated appeals process.

58. The effects of armed conflict fall disproportionately on women. The number of women-headed households increases significantly during conflict, as many women are widowed or lose contact with their husbands. Women are often forced into involuntary long-term sexual relations or forced labour. Prostitution, sexual violence and rape are common features of conflict situations and psychosocial support needs are vast. Particular attention must be paid to women ex-combatants and girl child soldiers, in terms of their demobilization and reintegration. The special needs of women and girls in refugee camps and settlements for internally displaced persons also need to be taken into account, particularly with regard to how the carrying out of normal responsibilities may expose women to greater risk of sexual violence. The policy of the Taliban and the often violent discrimination against women presents particular problems in assisting women in Afghanistan.

59. In resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, the Security Council called upon all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. The Administrative Committee on Coordination Inter-agency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality established a Task Force on Women, Peace and Security with the specific aim of following up on the implementation of Council resolution 1325 (2000). Its findings and recommendations on gender mainstreaming in humanitarian activities will be included in the report of the Secretary-General that was requested by the Council in the same resolution.

60. Reproductive health, nutrition, education and empowerment are important areas of focus for

improving the situation for women and girls. An Inter-Agency Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, comprising the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and Member States, has recommended a series of measures to ensure appropriate reproductive health services for refugees and displaced persons. The United Nations Population Fund has been increasingly active in this area, providing reproductive health supplies and services in the wake of natural disasters, such as those in El Salvador, India and Mongolia, and for displaced people in complex emergencies, such as those in East Timor and Eritrea.

61. Often overlooked is the important role played by women in the areas of conflict resolution, management and reconciliation. In the West African subregion, a number of women's groups are well organized and have established links with groups in other countries with whom they are developing common action plans, in addition to mobilizing civil society to bring pressure to bear on political and military leaders to resolve conflicts peacefully. However, the capacity of women's groups is often limited by lack of access to decision makers and resources. Member States are encouraged to consider ways that the work of such groups can be enhanced, so that they can play the fullest possible role in initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, respect for human rights and development.

4. Children

62. Child protection includes the right of every child to have access to uninterrupted basic care. This stands as a core commitment of the international community and should be an absolute priority for national and local governments, especially in prolonged complex emergencies. Inclusion of the child perspective, in both the assessment and analysis of a given situation, is extremely important for highlighting the necessary action when the social fabric and the elementary family and community economy have been severely weakened or destroyed. Behind the unacceptably high ratios of child and adolescent mortality remains the fact, that those who survive often do so against a background of failing basic health and education, diminishing household food security and limited or no reliable water and sanitation systems. Many children are displaced or threatened with displacement and further violence, particularly sexual violence in the case of the girl child.

63. The last decade has witnessed a growing commitment at the political level towards the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The Graça Machel report on the impact of conflict on children (A/51/306), the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the adoption of the children and armed conflict agenda by the Security Council and a number of regional organizations have all been important steps forward. The adoption of new international standards during the 1990s, particularly the Ottawa Convention and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the participation of children in conflict have likewise provided the humanitarian community with new and important tools for the protection of children.

64. In its 1999 agreed conclusions, the Economic and Social Council called for systematic, concerted and comprehensive inter-agency efforts on behalf of children, as well as adequate and sustainable resource allocation to provide them with emergency assistance and long-term measures. Initial steps have been taken to reflect the growing political commitment towards child protection which are expected to lead to greater respect for the new international standards, by all parties to a conflict, at a scale that can trigger measurable impact. The breakthrough Security Council resolutions that included the protection of children in the mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping operations for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone (resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1265 (1999)) and allowed for the appointment of child protection advisers as an integral part of those missions, have been followed by two important developments: child protection issues now feature prominently in the training and orientation of the peacekeepers themselves, and child protection advisers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were able to consistently raise the issue of child recruitment with several armed opposition groups. Nonetheless, sustained access to all children affected by armed conflict has remained elusive, mainly against a background of low funding of child-specific priority projects, including for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. By way of follow-up to the 1991 World Summit on Children, the General Assembly has decided to convene a special session on children in September 2001.

IV. Progress and constraints in strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance

A. Tools and mechanisms of humanitarian response

65. During the ten years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, the United Nations system has had to anticipate and respond creatively to rapidly changing dynamics in a variety of emergency situations, and has faced a range of challenges. The tools and mechanisms established under resolution 46/182 have been the backbone for ensuring coordinated and coherent response in these emergencies.

1. Emergency Relief Coordinator

66. The role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator as required under resolution 46/182 is to ensure better preparation for, as well as rapid and coherent response to, natural disasters and other emergencies. Notably, the office was created on the understanding that the requisite resources for it and the related coordination mechanisms described below would be provided. In the past ten years, the United Nations system has accepted and recognized that, with the support of these mechanisms and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Emergency Relief Coordinator provides key leadership for better coordination. At the same time, the United Nations humanitarian entities have realized the importance of having ownership of coordination and that the effectiveness of the coordination mechanisms depends most on people contributing as a team. The role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator is not just to coordinate immediate response to crises, but to be strategic in doing so, and particularly to contribute to the smooth transition from life-saving assistance to sustainable development.

67. The humanitarian system is now better informed by the political environment in which assistance is given and the role and activities of peace operations. A key task for the Emergency Relief Coordinator remains that of advocating that the humanitarian agenda and the principles and nature of humanitarian action be recognized and respected, particularly in peacekeeping operations. Other challenges include strengthening his leadership as the inter-agency focal point on internally displaced persons and engaging more actively in negotiations for access to vulnerable populations in general. In addition, the Coordinator must manage the increasing field presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure that it adheres to the core mandate of the Office.

2. Inter-Agency Standing Committee

68. There is no question that, ten years ago, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee was a unique concept, bringing together the United Nations humanitarian bodies with non-United Nations organizations, some of which are standing invitees to the Committee, such as the International Organization for Migration, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to engage in fruitful dialogue on humanitarian issues. The intervening years have demonstrated the foresightedness of the initiative, particularly in the light of the increasingly more important role played by non-governmental organizations in providing humanitarian assistance. It is paramount for effective coordination that the United Nations work yet more closely with these organizations. In this regard, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee must be strengthened to maintain its central role as a key coordination and consultative mechanism among its core members and standing invitees.

69. Given the very nature and breadth of its membership, it is not always possible for all the executive heads of each member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to meet formally on a regular basis. However, the creation of the Committee has encouraged much more informal consultation and meetings amongst the executive heads and this spirit is now firmly entrenched. This is supported by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee working group and a variety of subsidiary reference groups and task forces established by the Committee which have fostered cooperation between the participating bodies at different levels. Through these bodies, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has become increasingly useful for operational purposes by continuing to develop and refine its coordinated approaches to humanitarian crisis, in accordance with the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council. It has articulated key policy and operational issues, such as how best to address the transition from relief to

development, post-conflict reintegration, staff security, the relationship between human rights and humanitarian action, mainstreaming the gender perspective, the humanitarian impact of sanctions and the consolidated appeals process. Coordinated work has ranged from joint logistics arrangements and joint assessments of needs to formulating policy on what tools are required to improve a coordinated response.

70. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is also a forum for consultation on the establishment of field coordination structures. In particular, it is involved in the selection of resident/humanitarian coordinators who have an important role to play in ensuring systematic dissemination and implementation of key Inter-Agency Standing Committee initiatives and statements, as well as providing feedback to the appropriate part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on important issues, which require debate and a policy response. An improved process of consultation and feedback between the humanitarian coordinators and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will make it yet more useful and responsive to concerns raised by persons in the field.

3. Central Emergency Revolving Fund

71. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund was principally set up to allow for rapid response to humanitarian emergencies and is managed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with the operational agencies concerned. Since its inception in 1992, over $200 million has been disbursed on a revolving basis to meet the immediate humanitarian needs in the initial phase of an emergency, of which some $33 million was given in the last year (since 1 June 2000). Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the range and variety of funding mechanisms for humanitarian emergencies. In recent years, United Nations operational organizations have first resorted to their own trust funds and specific emergency funds and internal reserves and have called upon the Central Emergency Revolving Fund only when their needs surpassed their own financial resources. As a result, the use of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has been uneven in recent years with fewer advances being requested.

72. Since its establishment under resolution 46/182, no significant adjustments have been made to the operations of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, despite important changes in the humanitarian environment, such as the increasing number of natural disasters, the prevalence of protracted humanitarian emergencies for which funds have been difficult to secure, and the more frequent incidents of murder and kidnapping of humanitarian staff. To transform the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into an instrument that is more responsive to the changes that have occurred in the humanitarian field since 1991, the Secretary-General has prepared a separate note on enhancing the functioning and utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (A/55/649), which will be considered by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. The note contains recommendations aimed at ensuring a more efficient utilization of the Fund by expanding its use to support humanitarian assistance for natural disasters and protracted emergencies and for security arrangements for United Nations and associated personnel. The Secretary-General also proposes that the level of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund be reduced from $50 million to $40 million, with the remaining $10 million being transferred to a trust fund to be established for life-saving assistance, particularly in Africa. Member States are encouraged to give due consideration to the Secretary-General's recommendations in this regard.

4. The consolidated appeals process

73. Since its inception in 1991, there have been continuous efforts to improve the consolidated appeals process as a process and a coordination tool. The consolidated appeals process has considerably evolved and is widely recognized and accepted as a key tool to coordinate humanitarian strategies and appeal for funds. It is now more systematic and structured and benefits from the enhanced role of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. A few key, recognized challenges remain, such as better prioritizing the needs outlined in consolidated appeal documents. The introduction of the "consolidated appeals process-revision" facility has made it possible to revise either the strategy or project parts of the document, independently of each other. Several parts of the appeals have been updated to adjust to changing situations and resulting needs, without the need to reissue the appeals. Online revisions and contributions reporting transformed the consolidated appeal into a living instrument. In particular, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has improved the financial tracking system on ReliefWeb, in response to donor requests for substantive financial analysis to

understand the reasons for and the impact of underfunding.

74. Donors have reiterated strong support for the consolidated appeals process as one of the most successful tools for humanitarian coordination and have clearly expressed their commitment to the process through the common observations resulting from donors' retreat on the consolidated appeals process and Coordination in Humanitarian Emergencies, held in Montreux, Switzerland, in March 2001. However, statements of support for the process itself need to be accompanied by further coordination among donors to ensure that there is broad support for the strategy expressed in the consolidated appeals process. For this purpose, a first informal discussion between agencies and donors was held in Geneva in January 2001. Despite growing donor interest in seeing better coordinated and consolidated plans covering the gamut of needs and agency proposals in a given emergency situation, there continues to be a tendency to favour bilateral assistance. At times, this comes at the expense of multilateral funding, thereby making the coordination of international response more difficult.

75. Contributions to the consolidated appeals process fell from $1.96 billion in 1994 to $1.2 billion in 2000, and the share of requirements met has shown a steady downward trend, from 80 per cent in 1994 to 59 per cent in 2000. During the 2001 mid-year review, particular focus was placed on the impact of underfunding. As at 22 May, six months after the 2001 consolidated appeals were launched, only 23 per cent of the $2.8 billion requested has been funded. It was stressed that this may seriously undermine the capacity of the process as a coordination tool. Donors were urged to work more closely together to address these requirements in a more balanced way. This requires donors to fund the package of projects in the appeal and not just certain sectors. Some crises are almost ignored, and in others, emergency food aid receives the bulk of contributions, while non-food sectors, such as agriculture, health, education, and water and sanitation remain woefully underfunded. Consequently, the goals and objectives of the consolidated appeals process, particularly those relating to rehabilitation, are not met and urgent needs are not addressed. Agency buy-in to the process also suffers, although there has been considerable improvement in this regard and in the use of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan as a priority setting and common planning tool, which now forms part of the consolidated appeals process. More work, including training, is also needed to achieve the full commitment of resident/humanitarian coordinators to lead the process at the country level. With the expertise and participation of donor Governments, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs intends to carry out an analysis of donor funding patterns and the strategic coherence of the consolidated appeals process, to identify ways to address imbalances.

76. To avoid multiplication of tools and to ensure that an integrated strategy is undertaken in the recovery phase, including political, security, humanitarian and development dimensions, linkages between the consolidated appeals process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework need to be developed and made more explicit. Indicators developed for the common country assessments may be used to inform vulnerability analysis within the consolidated appeals process. The United Nations country team in the Republic of the Congo devised an innovative approach, combining the essential elements of the consolidated appeals process, the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework into a single "United Nations Plan". The Plan responds to challenges in the transition phase with a single planning document. It includes analysis and assessment, identifies priority areas and key issues, describes a programming framework and lists the activities from the various agencies that require funding. It also reviews humanitarian needs and presents possible scenarios of returning crisis for contingency planning, while outlining continuing short-term programmes, including a Common Humanitarian Action Plan.

77. Another creative development was the flexibility built into the United Nations inter-agency consolidated appeal for West Africa, which allows regional managers to redirect resources between countries and between activities, according to the principle that resources should follow the beneficiaries, wherever they are. Importantly, the appeal not only targeted refugees and internally displaced persons, but also took an innovative position with regard to assistance to host communities and contingency planning for future crises.

78. The importance of the consolidated appeals process in gender mainstreaming has been highlighted earlier. It is also recognized that human rights projects

have a legitimate place in the consolidated appeals process, to the extent that they highlight the intrinsic connections between human rights and effective humanitarian action. In addition, the topic of human rights is recognized as a fundamental "cross-cutting theme".

5. Strengthening the resident/humanitarian coordinator system

79. In 1994, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee approved the terms of reference for humanitarian coordinators who would "upon the occurrence of a complex emergency in a country" be appointed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, on behalf of the Secretary-General and after consultation with Inter-Agency Standing Committee, to be the senior United Nations official on the ground in charge of coordinating international humanitarian assistance. It was agreed that the United Nations resident coordinator serving in the affected country would normally become the humanitarian coordinator, although two other possibilities were foreseen: the separate appointment of a humanitarian coordinator or the designation of a "lead agency", whose local country director would exercise the functions of humanitarian coordinator. In 1997, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee reviewed the various coordination mechanisms and reaffirmed that the current resident coordinator should become the humanitarian coordinator if he or she has the necessary profile. Otherwise, an immediate replacement should simultaneously fulfil the resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator functions. Only in those cases where the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee determined that the same person could not carry out the dual resident/humanitarian coordinator functions would a separate humanitarian coordinator be appointed.

80. To better inform the ongoing debate on appropriate field coordination models, agencies are collaborating to draw lessons from recent experiences in United Nations humanitarian coordination to identify the key features of those arrangements which have provided added value in the field. There is also increased interest by humanitarian agencies to play a major role in the resident/humanitarian coordinator system. Humanitarian experience is being given increasing prominence in the inter-agency process charged with reviewing candidates and a humanitarian component is now included in the competency assessment process. The terms of reference for the heads offices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and their working relationship with resident/humanitarian coordinators is also under review. However, against this background, there have been problems in designating resident/humanitarian coordinators for a few key locations. Members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee are working together on methodologies to streamline the selection process and define interim arrangements to avoid delays in the appointments of coordinators.

B. Supporting the coordination and response role of regional, national and local actors

81. Indigenous actors have the advantage of being better able to mobilize local resources for both preparedness and response activities. Efforts to strengthen regional humanitarian capacities must be undertaken with the ultimate goal of strengthening and enhancing local capacities. In doing so, there is a need to engage the entire community in responding to any disaster, in order to capture the range of knowledge and resources that the different members of the community can contribute.

82. To strengthen the role of regional bodies and national actors in humanitarian response, including non-governmental organizations, the international community should promote the decentralization of the management of humanitarian assistance. International actors should gradually endeavour to play a lesser role in the direct provision of humanitarian aid and focus on strengthening indigenous preparedness capabilities to facilitate increased responsibility for and ownership of humanitarian response at the regional and national level. International actors can support this approach through, inter alia, the provision of technical and financial support. The international community needs to be increasingly seen as complementing the efforts of local actors to prepare for and deal with humanitarian emergencies, whenever possible.

83. In conflict situations, international humanitarian actors are increasingly cognizant of the underlying political and human rights circumstances in which they operate. Building partnership and trust with Governments and local authorities is key to providing more effective assistance, based on better assessments

of vulnerable populations, and helps to reduce security risks, as local communities become stakeholders and advisers in humanitarian operations. Such dialogue ensures that relief aid is given in a way that does not generate dependency and jeopardize the capacity of the receivers to regain their full self-reliance as soon as conditions permit. Local authorities and communities can advise on the possible long-term impact of the immediate response to humanitarian needs and guide the way forward during the post-emergency phase. A vital element of this process is the participation of women. In normal circumstances, women generally have particular resources and expertise based on their usual activities and roles in the community. However, in times of conflict, these roles can become distorted and frequently, women must also assume more of the traditional roles of men when they are absent, wounded or killed. Equally important for societies emerging from conflict is the fact that planning for recovery benefits from rights-based programming carried out with representatives of the different members of the local community concerned.

84. In recognition of the need to support regional and national capacities and in addition to the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination and UNDP advisers referred to in paragraph 35 above, the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination regional groups, which include experts from the region concerned, now exist in Europe, Latin America and the South Pacific and in 2001 will include the Caribbean region, bringing ten new countries into the system. It is recommended that a similar regional group be established in Asia, the world's most disaster-prone continent. Among the fundamental recommendations of the recent review of the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination system was the need further to enhance awareness and ownership of the system in disaster-prone countries. Developing partnerships in these regions and preparing the ground for missions was seen as paramount to the ability of the system to provide effective support.

85. Following the series of earthquakes in recent years, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group has reactivated its groups in the Asian and Latin American regions, bringing together countries that are prone to earthquakes with those countries that have a capacity to respond to urban search and rescue operations within the respective regions. These groups build on lessons learned in previous disasters in designing preparedness and response concepts for their region, based on the standardization criteria defined by International Search and Rescue Advisory Group for training, equipment and coordination procedures in the field. Earthquake-prone countries are encouraged to participate in these regional activities to enhance their national preparedness to respond to earthquakes and to integrate their national search and rescue structures into regional and international ones. At the request of interested Governments, consultations recently began on the question of a legal framework for international urban search and rescue. Some 22 countries (earthquake-prone and response providers from all continents) have formed a Core Group which met in February 2001. The consultations will be expanded to include a broader range of countries in a second phase later in the year.

C. Strengthening coordination and linkages in crisis situations

86. The Economic and Social Council, in its agreed conclusions, reaffirmed the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and called upon the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure a high degree of coherence between the assistance and the political and human rights aspects of the United Nations response to crises. Humanitarian action is one of several aspects of the possible response by the United Nations to a conflict and must always be accompanied by efforts to bring about a just and sustainable peace. The United Nations role in the fields of peace and security and humanitarian affairs is distinct; nevertheless, it is vital that the United Nations system attempt to ensure a complementary approach where possible. The United Nations has taken several steps to improve coherence while maintaining the necessary independence of humanitarian action. One example is the Secretary-General's note of guidance on the relationship between resident/humanitarian coordinators and his special representatives, which was issued in December 2000 and which attempts, for the first time, to define more clearly the relations between the different roles of the United Nations in countries in crisis.

87. Coordination structures at headquarters and, most importantly, at the field level must be transparent, particularly when there is a multiplicity of actors

dealing with humanitarian and human rights issues, in an environment that includes political and peace programmes. In Afghanistan, the United Nations system operates according to a strategic framework which uniquely brings together the political, assistance and human rights dimensions of the organization in a concerted strategy aimed at supporting peace. It is supported by the principled common programming approach in which all aid actors (the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and donors) participate.

88. The Emergency Relief Coordinator, on a routine basis, through the resident/humanitarian coordinators in countries affected by complex emergencies, seeks to strengthen coherence between all parts of the United Nations system whilst maintaining the appropriate independence of humanitarian action. In addition, as part of the follow-up to the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809), the Emergency Relief Coordinator has assisted in the development of related system-wide policies. This includes improving the coordination between relief and development efforts and the reform of headquarters structures which support peace and humanitarian operations in the field. There must be a clear understanding on the respective roles and division of labour and responsibilities among political, peacekeeping and humanitarian actors, which must then be clearly and consistently explained to and reinforced with the warring parties and population in general. The challenge then is how to develop broad guidelines that enable the various bodies to maintain their independence, but at the same time provide complementary support.

89. In view of the variety of actors involved in responding to crises, the United Nations humanitarian bodies need to ensure closer collaboration with other humanitarian actors, notably non-governmental organizations. This is particularly important, given the growing role of non-governmental organizations in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the increasing amount of funding that is channelled directly to them. Much greater attention needs to be paid to both formulating strategies and coordinating activities with non-governmental organizations and encouraging adherence to a common humanitarian strategy. In situations of protracted crisis, as well as in post-crisis and recovery situations, coordination and partnerships between development and aid actors, including the Bretton Woods institutions, becomes increasingly important.

90. The private sector has provided support in the area of disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation. Support has been provided in areas such as communications, transportation and infrastructure. For example, a major communications company collaborated with the United Nations and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in providing material and logistical support and training of personnel and through participation in assessments in El Salvador, India and Tajikistan. However, not all business seeks to be helpful or socially responsible. Some national and multinational entities gain an economic advantage from the collapse of governance structures in conflict-shattered countries. This can impact on the humanitarian situation and have direct consequences on humanitarian operations. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is examining and analysing ways and means by which some of these negative consequences may be mitigated and plans to engage with representatives of industry, non-governmental organizations and civil society to discuss the issue further.

91. Recent response to natural disasters has seen an expanded use of military assets. For example, in the response to the floods in Mozambique in 2000, and to a lesser extent in 2001, a large portion of the aircraft, helicopters and boats deployed was provided from the military assets of various countries and managed by inter-agency joint logistics cells. The database on the use of military and civil defence assets is constantly updated for more efficient mobilization and coordination of the use of military and civil defence assets in humanitarian operations. The possible inclusion of the use of Advanced Technologies in Disaster Response in the Central Registry is under study. The 1994 "Oslo guidelines" cover the use of military and civil defence assets in natural and technological disaster response. However, more donor States have decided to respond with military assets to international requests for humanitarian support in complex emergencies, such as in East Timor and Kosovo. The United Nations is currently re-examining when and how such assets should be used and provided in these circumstances.

D. Information management

1. Preparedness, management and coordination

92. The collection, analysis, synthesis and dissemination of information are recognized as key elements of all coordination activities. The sharing and integration of cross-sectoral, institutional and geographical data increases the quality of decision-making and reduces response time. Information, such as statistics on population movements, existing health infrastructure, agricultural households, etc., supports contingency planning, preparedness and response capacities, and helps to set the stage for future development planning. The 1999 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council pointed to the need for improved preparedness and response capacities. In this regard, there is an overall effort to improve the quality, timeliness and scope of information shared in relation to emergencies between the concerned government, humanitarian actors and other Member States at the national, regional and international levels.

93. Key challenges are to minimize duplication in data-gathering and maximize its accessibility to potential users. In the last few years, a number of field-based coordinated information centres have been established. Significantly, these have developed on the ground in response to an identified need for information coordination and management. An important part of this process for future centres will be further to draw on and strengthen the capacity of national and local authorities to gather and share information on the needs of their populations.

94. In 1998, the Geographic Information Support Team[2] was established to reinforce the use of geographic information as a catalyst for information management. It facilitated the creation of information centres, jointly established by the United Nations, other humanitarian partners and Governments, to support field operations, such as those in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Each of the various ad hoc field-based centres has developed important new tools and identified methods for streamlining the management and coordination of information, that will be replicated and used in establishing new centres. These include agreed frameworks for gathering, reporting and exchanging information; information systems on assistance, refugees, internally displaced persons; common digital maps; libraries of assessments; donor resource tracking tools; and project planning tools. In many of the information centres, the involvement of members of the development community has been strengthened to facilitate efforts to coordinate the transition from relief to reconstruction and development.

2. Global online information management

95. The above paragraph contains examples of information centres established for the specific purpose of responding to a particular crisis, which although available to a larger audience, especially target the players in the field. A global permanent mechanism is also important for ensuring widespread access to relevant, reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date information. To this end, the ReliefWeb site was developed to facilitate information exchange, primarily among the humanitarian community, and is now a key source for the online dissemination of information on natural disasters and other emergencies. Governments, the United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies are encouraged to actively share information via ReliefWeb, which today offers access to over 600 information sources (including media). Its recently redesigned Map Centre is one of the largest online collections of maps, containing maps with both baseline and thematic humanitarian-related information. In 2001, ReliefWeb established an office in Kobe, Japan, to increase the coverage of natural disasters and other emergencies in the Asia Pacific region. A Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre was also established early in 2001 to support information management amongst search and rescue response partners. Although still under development, it proved its usefulness as a quick access, information-sharing platform in the earthquake disasters in El Salvador and India.

3. Contextual information

96. As important as the need to share accurate information on crisis situations is the need to understand the changing political and social context in which assistance plans are to be implemented. Failure to do so can lead to the provision of assistance being poorly perceived or wrongly targeted. The United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network, established in Nairobi during the Great Lakes crisis, and later replicated in Abidjan and Johannesburg, seeks to ensure that accurate, impartial and timely

information on regional events and trends reaches decision makers in Governments, aid agencies and United Nations partners. Two key developments for 2000 were the establishment of desks for the Horn of Africa and Central Asia. The former covers Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Sudan and Somalia. For Somalia, it also pioneered the "WebSpecial", a news magazine on the peace agreement, and developed a radio project for people in rural areas. For the latter, feasibility studies conducted early in 2000 confirmed that news coverage of Central Asia was poor and often partisan. The Islamabad office of the Information Network helps to fill the void, by reporting on humanitarian events in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and, more recently, on the Islamic Republic of Iran and other central Asian republics.

V. Challenges to providing humanitarian assistance

A. Access

97. In numerous countries around the world, humanitarian actors are present but unable to reach large portions of affected populations needing their assistance. Access is one of the key challenges facing humanitarian operations, particularly in complex emergencies. Frequently access is limited by the prevailing security situation but sometimes the obstacle is also a question of policy on the part of the authorities controlling a given region or country. For example, from time to time, the Government of Israel has imposed external and internal closures on the occupied Palestinian territory, obstructing free movement of humanitarian goods and personnel. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, access to the population has become considerably easier since 1995, although some tight controls on the work of humanitarian agencies still remain, particularly with regard to freedom of movement, monitoring and evaluation.

98. At the inception of the crisis in Guinea, total lack of access to the conflict areas, owing to insecurity and the Government's stringent military measures, prevented any intervention by relief organizations. However, following negotiations with key international leaders, particularly those carried out by United Nations agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government agreed to the international relief and humanitarian agencies regaining access to almost all the concerned areas and committed to supporting the relocation further inland of the refugees stranded in those areas. Based on the principles of "safe access to refugees" and "safe passage for refugees" set forth by the High Commissioner for Refugees and accepted by the Government, some 57,000 refugees were relocated from the Parrot's Beak area during May 2001.

99. In Burundi and Somalia, the ability to provide humanitarian assistance is dictated by the level of insecurity surrounding both the population and aid workers themselves. Attacks on aid workers in the past year demanded yet another reassessment of the security situation at a time when the humanitarian community was seeking to expand its programmes in those countries. Nonetheless, the United Nations has continued to advocate for increased access to all populations requiring assistance and to promote peace-building efforts. On 7 February 2001, the Minister of Human Rights of Burundi and the Humanitarian Coordinator signed a protocol on opening dialogue between the authorities and the humanitarian community and finding joint mechanisms to improve access to vulnerable people and provide them with assistance. In Somalia, the United Nations country team is consolidating past policies and guidelines on international assistance to that country and the division of roles and responsibilities into a document on "structured relations", to be agreed upon within the Somalia Aid Coordination Body. It will incorporate elements of the Body's 1995 Code of Conduct, which include respect for local customs, impartiality and assistance, in return for guarantees of security and justice for perpetrators of criminal acts. This centrally agreed set of ground rules then forms the basis for more detailed negotiations between agencies and the authorities. In the Sudan, the unique Technical Committee on Humanitarian Assistance brings together the parties to the conflict, the United Nations and donors to discuss access, security, humanitarian principles and communications. It has produced several joint protocol agreements signed by the Government and warring parties to improve accountability.

100. In Angola, as in a number of other cases, access to the population is further complicated by the widespread presence of landmines. Surface access has been so severely restricted by landmines and insecurity that 70 per cent of humanitarian aid must be

transported by air. However, the Government has assisted the internally displaced population by opening six major road corridors to allow humanitarian agencies to reach needy areas. With improved accessibility, the number of newly displaced persons has fallen by almost two thirds since 1999. This begs the question to what extent lack of access actually increases the size of the humanitarian problem. Given the inability of aid agencies to access the needy in adverse circumstances, affected populations sometimes have no choice but to become displaced in their own efforts to reach assistance, thereby increasing their vulnerability and exposing them to possibly greater security risks. Although insecurity will always lead to new displacement, improved efforts to negotiate access might at least afford some people the opportunity to remain in their own homes where coping mechanisms are more readily available.

101. However, negotiating access raises problems of its own, as meaningful discussions can only be held with the parties or elements that are actually in physical control of the area. Negotiating access is an extremely intricate and time-consuming process, with no certain guarantees, that has a vast impact on the conduct of humanitarian operations. The humanitarian community regularly finds itself in difficulties over its engagement and negotiations with armed groups in pursuit of its humanitarian goals. This is largely the result of a lack of respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles by these groups.

102. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the withdrawal of the parties from the front lines and the deployment of peacekeepers may result in improved access for humanitarian agencies and create the necessary security conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Even prior to this, attempts to create partnerships with local community leaders to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian operations and address security concerns had met with some success. Notably, following a series of attacks in the north-eastern city of Bunia, the humanitarian community mobilized and engaged in discussions with leaders from the different communities, and successfully defined and enlarged the space for humanitarian action, both for the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. This was done through establishing humanitarian liaison committees at each of the sites where threats had been made against humanitarian operators, to allow for clarification of misunderstandings, and to clear the way for humanitarian operations. Tragically, the beginning of improved dialogue has been vastly overshadowed by the recent murder of six ICRC staff in that area. Negotiations are continuing with the committees to avoid further tragedies. Elsewhere in the country, the United Nations is negotiating with the Government and rebel authorities to reopen the rivers, now used only by military traffic, to trade and commerce under the "Boat for Peace" initiative. Prior to all this, UNICEF and WHO negotiated days of access or cessation in hostilities for the purpose of immunizing children. The idea of humanitarian pauses was also used in Indonesia, which not only allowed assistance to reach needy populations but led to a reduction in the fighting, thereby paving the way for dialogue.

103. Member States have a vital role to play in supporting the efforts of those negotiating access, providing additional leverage or undertaking complementary diplomatic and political action. It is clear that if access is successfully negotiated or is allowed by improvements in the security situation, the opportunity must be seized. But this also has important funding implications as gaining access may substantially increase the size of the beneficiary populations. In Angola, there are reportedly some 525,000 displaced persons in areas to which the humanitarian community does not currently have access. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, if improvements continue, the humanitarian community must rise to the challenge of providing support to more than two million internally displaced persons, less than half of whom were previously receiving humanitarian assistance, owing to lack of access. For many programmes, current beneficiary figures and related requests for funding are based on the people that can be reached now. Access to new beneficiaries that has been gained after a long struggle must be accompanied by immediate assistance, which will be totally dependent on speedy and flexible funding arrangements.

B. Safety and security of staff

104. The report of the Secretary-General on safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/55/494) highlighted the range of threats against United Nations personnel, the inadequacy of the existing security management structure and proposals to enhance the

safety and security of those personnel. Meanwhile, attacks on humanitarian workers have continued. The latest incidents since the issuance of that report include the March 2001 murder of a UNHCR worker in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the kidnapping of eight aid workers by an armed faction in Somalia and the armed attack on a WFP food convoy in Burundi that left five relief workers injured, all occurring within a month. This was followed by the kidnapping of four aid workers in the Sudan and, in April 2001, six ICRC workers were brutally murdered in a targeted ambush in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. More recently, an ICRC co-pilot was killed when his aircraft was shot at while flying over south Sudan. Security of humanitarian workers must clearly remain a high priority of the Secretary-General, Member States and humanitarian organizations.

105. In the 1999 agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council, Member States recognized the importance of strengthening staff security by calling upon all parties to ensure the safety of international and national humanitarian personnel. The United Nations has undertaken numerous efforts to strengthen staff security management. During its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly will be presented with a report containing a proposal to expand the scope of the Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel (A/55/637) and a report in response to General Assembly resolution 55/175 of 19 December 2000 on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel. It is clear that the strengthening of and adequate support for the United Nations Security Coordinator and the United Nations operational agencies will be required for effective security management and to optimize safety and security of staff. In this regard, in General Assembly resolution 55/175, Member States called for expeditious consideration of the Secretary-General's recommendation to appoint a full-time United Nations Security Coordinator.

106. Failure to address security issues endangers and costs the lives not only of humanitarian workers but also the vulnerable populations they assist. After the attack on the Atambua UNHCR compound and slaughtering of three UNHCR workers in West Timor on 6 September 2000, the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations evacuated all international staff from West Timor. Security Council resolution 1319 (2000) of 8 September 2000 laid down the conditions that the Government of Indonesia must meet before humanitarian aid will resume. Until this occurs, some 85,000 refugees are waiting in camps, many of which are in areas controlled by militia, adding to fears for their safety.

107. Recognizing that the United Nations and its non-United Nations humanitarian partners operate in the same complex crises environments, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has endorsed the recommendations of a task force on staff security which are aimed at increasing the security collaboration at the field level between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The recommendations deal with cooperation in the areas of training, use of common communications, joint security planning, information sharing and context analysis.

108. Security is indispensable but it requires the financial support of Governments. In many cases, staff security is clearly limited by the amount of resources for security. United Nations country teams need to be given the resources to do their jobs more safely. Discussions are ongoing with Member States to ensure that the funds needed to cover the minimum requirements to strengthen staff security are provided. Staff security requirements have to be placed on a solid and stable financial basis and Member States are encouraged to make that commitment. This will clearly highlight the priority that both the Secretary-General and the Member States place on the safety of United Nations humanitarian staff.

C. The "war economy" in humanitarian emergencies

109. A characteristic of many of the situations in which the humanitarian community is involved is the almost total erosion of central authority. In these circumstances, humanitarian actors witness a number of new local dynamics that can impact on the humanitarian situation, including the emergence of a "war economy". Dilapidated infrastructure, the absence of political or social vision and the increasing, if not total disrespect for, governing bodies has resulted in the growing estrangement of these governance structures from many portions of the areas they nominally control, particularly in resource rich areas. The vacuum left by a weak political and administrative

authority in resource rich areas allows alternative structures to emerge and gain total control of economic assets. These alternative structures are frequently disinterested in issues of governance and, more often than not, in areas of conflict, are the instigators and promoters of violence. This is particularly so if the resources relate to illegal trade, such as narcotics. Other "war economies" can develop, such as trafficking in arms or misappropriation and sale of humanitarian assistance. Some have benefited from globalization and the role of international investors who provide the means to sustain their influence, such as arms and other logistics.

110. These alternative power structures also trample on the authority exercised by community leaders. The conflict environments dominated by economic strongmen can often extend to a form of fragmented and localized violence as smaller players gain power through the exploitation of local resources and manipulation of local civilian populations. In many of the current conflict situations, such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, local strongmen have a vested interest in the perpetuation of instability and may view the re-establishment of strong administrative or governance structures as threatening to their objectives.

111. Meaningful humanitarian programmes must take this into account and be informed by the context, involving representatives of beneficiary populations in programme design. Increased support for community coping mechanisms and the empowerment of traditional community leadership through funding of local community initiatives is also important. In the same vein, the efforts of human rights and other actors to bolster and strengthen the rule of law and administration of justice should be encouraged and supported. There is a shared responsibility by all parts of the United Nations to promote climates of accountability for criminality and human rights abuse.

D. Sanctions

112. Sanctions regimes continue to pose an increasingly difficult dilemma for the United Nations dual mandate of preserving peace and protecting human needs. As the Secretary-General noted, humanitarian and human rights policy goals cannot easily be reconciled with those of sanctions regimes.[3] Economic sanctions are too often a blunt instrument[4] and may impose hardships on a civilian population that are disproportionate to likely political gains. A general consciousness has evolved within the Security Council that, further collective actions in the Security Council within the context of any further sanctions regime should be directed to minimize unintended adverse side effects of sanctions on the most vulnerable segments of targeted countries.[5] In its resolution 1325 (1999), the Security Council made particular reference to bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls in considering appropriate humanitarian exemptions. It is imperative that strategies for mitigating adverse humanitarian impacts on vulnerable populations be incorporated from the very beginning.

113. The Security Council has responded positively to this challenge and has increasingly used more targeted sanctions, such as in Afghanistan, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Security Council is using monitoring and reporting mechanisms to assess the humanitarian implications of the sanctions regime imposed on Afghanistan. This development has helped to address some of the concerns about the involvement of the United Nations in sanctions-related suffering.

E. Linkages between relief and rehabilitation and development in post-conflict and natural disaster situations

114. The importance of linking relief and development activities is reflected in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and has also been reiterated by the Economic and Social Council in its agreed conclusions of 1998 and 1999. It is also a key preoccupation of the United Nations system. In both natural disasters and complex emergencies, the issue of relief and rehabilitation must be considered from the outset and development tools applied at the earliest. The United Nations inter-agency transitional appeal has been used as a tool in several emergencies, including for the aftermath of the El Salvador earthquakes, in an attempt to highlight and fill an existing relief to development gap. Based on varying responses from donors, this tool is currently being further refined. Both the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes offer opportunities to identify and implement transitional strategies and require coherence in the immediate and longer-term analysis, planning and programming. The United Nations is exploring ways, through the Brookings

Process, of improving implementation partnerships among donors, agencies, Governments and civil society, namely to make use of the available aid resources and instruments and to divide responsibilities among partners.

115. The biggest threat to the transition to sustainable development is conflict. In May 2001, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has engaged in broad consultations on the issue of post-conflict reintegration to identify ways to promote and support transitional initiatives, particularly with respect to the analysis, vision, strategy and teamwork of coordination structures. Their implementation will involve links to other post-conflict-related activities and the development of a compendium of field-based transitional-related practices and experiences and an interactive web site. Also crucial to the transition to sustainable development is the successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs has given guidance on the coordination, the institutional division of labour and on how to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations at the field and headquarters level to deal with this issue.

116. Another key challenge in bridging this gap is gaining the interest of Governments and other non-United Nations actors in the process. Governments have emphasized that development actors should be brought in as early as possible in formulating a common humanitarian action plan through the consolidated appeals process, but have stated that their own early involvement was also critical. They have noted that coherence is needed from the Member States in the governing boards of various United Nations bodies and from international financial institutions (Bretton Woods institutions) to promote complementary strategic programming. They have added that donors should also continue to explore innovative methods to overcome constraints to funding transition activities, such as through establishing special funding mechanisms for the transitional recovery phase.

F. Administrative issues

1. Rules and procedures in emergencies of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

117. By resolution 46/182, the General Assembly decided that special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the United Nations to enable all organizations quickly to disburse emergency funds, procure emergency supplies and equipment and recruit emergency staff. In order to resolve, within the parameters of existing United Nations administrative procedures, the majority of problems which impeded rapid response to emergencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator requested the Secretary-General to approve a delegation of authority for the use of extrabudgetary funding to support the field in humanitarian emergencies in the areas of finance, procurement and recruitment of emergency personnel.

118. In 1999, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was granted delegation of authority to issue financial authorizations and accept donor contributions without the approval of the United Nations Central Services. Arrangements were also made for the Office to draw upon dedicated support of the Geneva Central Administrative Services to ensure rapid deployment of personnel and equipment in emergency situations. These measures proved very useful in streamlining administrative actions during emergencies, although the Office continues to encounter difficulties in providing speedy support. In its 2000 humanitarian segment, the Economic and Social Council called for special administrative rules and procedures to allow the United Nations to provide personnel and logistics to respond to humanitarian needs. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs completed a review of administrative procedures in emergencies and, based on the experience of recent humanitarian operations, recommended specific changes to address shortcomings. These include an enhanced delegation of authority and further streamlining of administrative procedures during the initial phase of an emergency, for recruiting emergency personnel and conducting financial transactions and procurement in the field. The recommendations are currently being considered by the relevant offices of the United Nations Central Services, in consultation with the Office.

119. However, delegation of authority and special administrative procedures alone cannot guarantee effective response in emergencies if they are not complemented by emergency preparedness and response mechanisms. Based on its recent internal review process, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is strengthening its administrative support to the field and enhancing its surge capacity to respond in a more timely and effective manner to emergencies.

2. Financial situation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

120. In the current biennium, the estimated extrabudgetary resources represent 89.5 per cent and the regular budget 10.5 per cent of the overall resources required by the Office, as compared with 89.1 and 10.9 per cent, respectively, in the biennium 1998-1999. For the Office's proposed programme budget for the forthcoming biennium, the Secretary-General has proposed a growth of 5.6 per cent over the 2000-2001 appropriations. Despite this increase, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continues to rely heavily on extrabudgetary resources, from which all of its field activities are funded. Donor support remains critical for the Office, particularly in funding some of the headquarters projects and field coordination requirements, which have remained consistently underfunded. As requested by a number of Member States, efforts should continue to secure a sustainable financial base for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

VI. Observations and recommendations

121. The broad nature of the present report illustrates the diversity of issues faced by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, over the ten years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 and some of the new humanitarian challenges and opportunities that have arisen. The sheer number of humanitarian organizations and the variety of activities they undertake testifies to the need for continuing to strengthen humanitarian coordination mechanisms, but the humanitarian environment and the context for their work have also changed, making extra demands on the system. Complex emergencies are increasingly characterized by internal conflicts with a multiplicity of parties and interests involved. Of note is the role of some "war economies" in perpetuating conflicts. Conflict-induced displacement has become larger, more complex and geographically widespread. Civilians are increasingly targeted and engaged in the conflict. Humanitarian workers themselves are operating closer to conflict areas than ever before, at enormous risk and with unacceptable losses. Nonetheless, huge numbers of vulnerable populations still remain difficult to access and assist. At the same time, natural disasters have occurred more frequently and repeatedly struck certain regions, sometimes in such quick succession that recovery processes have barely begun before the next crisis hits. Not only are they more frequent but also more damaging and more costly, both in human and financial terms, particularly in developing countries. Societies have become more vulnerable to disasters for a number of reasons, including poverty, poor planning and limited prevention, preparedness and response mechanisms.

122. The decade has offered opportunities for more rapid and efficient response to humanitarian emergencies. While the range of humanitarian actors has placed enormous demands on coordination mechanisms, it has also enabled more far-reaching response through consolidated efforts. Much more focus has been placed on strengthening the capacity of Governments and local communities in disaster-prone areas to prepare for and respond to crises and to mitigate potential damage. Regional mechanisms have begun to play an important role in coordinated responses to natural disasters and complex emergencies, but their full potential has yet to be realized. The approach to coordinated response to crises has become more strategic. Links to rehabilitation and development have been made earlier in the planning process, but gaps still exist. The more timely participation of development actors and improved donor funding through the transition period are required. In conflict situations, a higher degree of coherence has been achieved between the political, peacekeeping, humanitarian and human rights operations. But again, more is required, particularly to ensure full support and respect for the humanitarian imperative and principles in such circumstances.

123. Technology has improved, allowing more rapid and precise assessments of the consequences of emergencies. Better information management has enabled vital information to be more easily pooled and

then accessed by a broader range of actors. However, the humanitarian community is still at quite an early stage with regard to harnessing and utilizing all the advantages that technology could offer for more efficient and coordinated humanitarian response. The private sector has responded generously to the United Nations request for assistance but could be more closely engaged to develop more widespread corporate responsibility and suggest avenues for positive support. In all these efforts, the support of Member States is key. Despite the improvements over the last ten years in coordinated humanitarian response, the decade has demonstrated that humanitarian action is not a substitute for political action. Without concerted political and diplomatic efforts, many crises cannot be adequately resolved.

124. The tools and mechanisms established by General Assembly resolution 46/182 have proved their effectiveness throughout the decade, although they would benefit from further strengthening and refinement. Meeting the remaining challenges requires the ongoing engagement of Member States, the United Nations humanitarian entities and their partners. It also requires a reinforced commitment on the part of Member States to guarantee the necessary resources, in a stable and predictable way, to ensure a strong coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies.

125. In this regard, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council may wish:

Strengthening further coordination of humanitarian assistance

(a) To invite Member States and humanitarian organizations to support the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in discharging his functions, including negotiating improved access to vulnerable populations, in order to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;

(b) To support the strengthening of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in its efforts to improve the coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies;

(c) To invite the General Assembly to consider favourably the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the more efficient utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, in particular, with regard to its use to support humanitarian assistance in natural disasters, protracted emergencies and security arrangements for United Nations and associated personnel;

(d) To urge Member States to coordinate the allocation of resources to the consolidated appeals process and ensure balanced funding for the entire package of projects;

(e) To invite Member States to pay particular attention to funding staff security through various channels, including the consolidated appeals process;

(f) To invite donor Governments to consider ways and means to ensure timely funding of transitional activities, including providing the necessary resources to enable crisis-affected populations to resume economic and other self-help activities as soon as possible;

(g) To call upon Member States to support initiatives that encourage the sharing and dissemination of information among humanitarian organizations and Governments and the increased use of information technologies to strengthen further the humanitarian crisis preparedness and response capacities, particularly in developing countries;

Prevention, preparedness and response

(h) To request the international community to provide more support for strengthening regional and national prevention, preparedness and response capabilities, through, inter alia, the provision of technical and financial assistance;

(i) To encourage Member States and regional bodies to develop and maintain humanitarian contingency plans for natural disasters and environmental and complex crises, with the support of United Nations resident/humanitarian coordinators and the United Nations country teams;

(j) To take note of the work of regional United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams for coordinating humanitarian assistance during humanitarian emergencies and invite Member States to support the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to establish regional teams for Africa and Asia;

(k) To encourage Member States in regions prone to earthquakes to participate in the regional activities of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, both to enhance their national

preparedness to respond to earthquakes and to strengthen their capacities to engage in regional and international search and rescue response structures;

(l) To encourage Member States to support the efforts of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to undertake "lessons learned" and evaluation studies on the responses to natural disasters and complex emergencies, with a view to strengthening the system's future responses;

Groups with special needs

(m) To encourage Member States to recognize the positive role that crisis-affected populations can play in the provision of humanitarian assistance, and in subsequent rehabilitation and peace-building activities;

(n) To invite Members States to consider, in particular, ways that women's groups may be supported and enhanced to allow them to play the fullest possible role in initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, respect for human rights and development;

(o) To encourage Member States to support the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to address the needs of internally displaced persons in a coordinated manner, in the overall context of its humanitarian programmes;

(p) To encourage Member States to protect the rights of children and address their development needs, particularly with respect to their access to basic health and education services, both during and after conflict, as part of the effort to achieve long-term recovery and reconstruction;

(q) To encourage all international humanitarian actors to provide gender training for all staff to ensure that relevant gender perspectives are integrated into all areas of humanitarian work.

Notes

[1] S/2001/331.

[2] The Geographic Information Support is a United Nations-led ad hoc working group comprising the major United Nations humanitarian programmes, specialized agencies and other bodies (the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Bank, and donor agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development and the European Union.

[3] See the 1998 report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 1* (A/53/1).

[4] Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, dated 13 April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318).

[5] S/1995/300, annex I.